



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of St Edmundsbury  
and Ipswich

# The Benefice Profile

for

# South Hartismere

Gislingham, Mellis,  
Stoke Ash with Thwaite,  
Thorndon with Rishangles,  
Thornham Magna, Thornham Parva,  
Wetheringsett cum Brockford and Yaxley.

February 2024



# **SOUTH HARTISMERE BENEFICE**

Consisting of the parishes of  
**Gislingham, Mellis, Stoke Ash with Thwaite, Thorndon with Rishangles,  
Thornham Magna, Thornham Parva, Wetheringsett cum Brockford and Yaxley.**



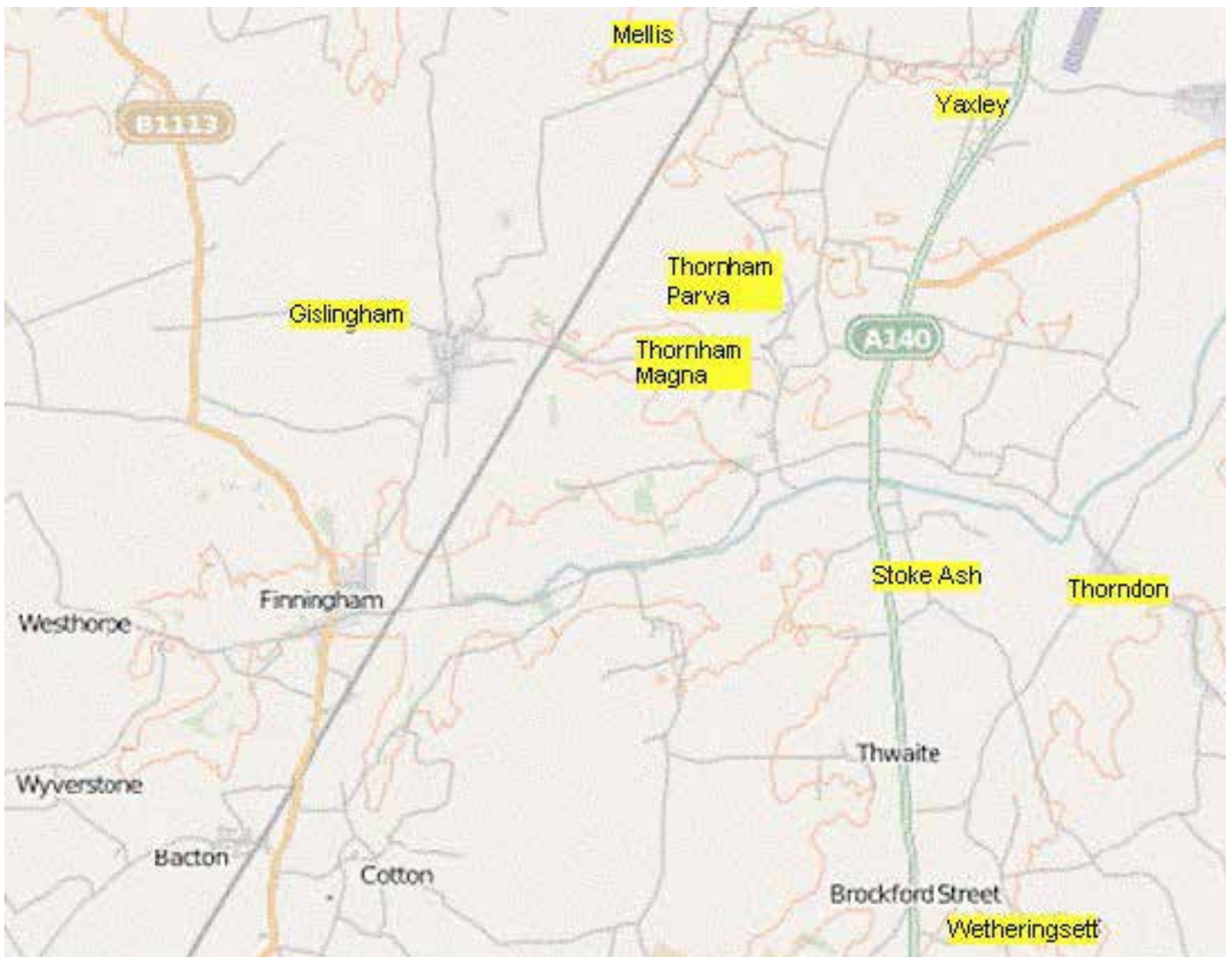
**An exciting opportunity to work collaboratively with the ministry team and congregations in our benefice.**

**Are you a person of deep faith who is creative and able to serve both traditional and new styles of worship?**

**Will you nurture both young and old, love and support the people in our parishes and be a sign of God's love among the villages?**

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## Introduction

The South Hartismere Benefice is made up of the eight rural parishes – eleven communities – of Gislingham, Mellis, Stoke Ash with Thwaite, Thorndon with Rishangles, Thornham Magna, Thornham Parva, Wetheringsett cum Brockford and Yaxley. Each village has its own character (and characters!). It is set within the gentle, attractive countryside of North Suffolk and is about five miles from the Norfolk market town of Diss. Ipswich, Norwich and the historic town of Bury St Edmunds are roughly a forty-minute drive away. As well as historic landmarks, all three towns offer many shops, cinemas, restaurants, theatres and both Norwich and Ipswich have Championship Football Teams. Ipswich and Norwich have universities and there is an FE college in Bury St Edmunds. Cambridge and the Suffolk coast are about an hour away by road. There is a twice hourly rail service from Diss to London Liverpool Street, with a journey time of one and a half hours. Norwich has its own international airport and there is a larger airport at Stansted which is about one and a half hours drive away. Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Norwich all have hospitals. Despite its proximity to major centres, there is a genuine feel of living in a rural community.

The benefice has a wide geographical spread. It is about 12 miles across at its longest stretch. The two furthest church buildings are some 20 - 30 minutes apart, depending on how many tractors, combine harvesters or sugar beet lorries are encountered along the way!

## The Benefice is looking for an energetic and enthusiastic incumbent who is deeply spiritual and who can:

- Be committed to releasing gifts in people and committed to working collaboratively with lay and ordained
- Be a leader and shepherd and an excellent communicator to an eight-church benefice.
- Look for opportunities to be creative and innovative in worship, whilst continuing to celebrate and explore the richness of Anglican worship.
- Nurture the committed and reach out to those, both young and old, who do not regularly come to church.
- Be prepared to take the church into the communities in all eight parishes.
- Strengthen and maintain creative links with our schools and support youth and children's work across the benefice.

## What we can offer our new incumbent:

- A Pioneer Curate, One Reader, and six Lay Elders, a family and children's worker, all of whom are ready to work as part of the ministry team.
- Hard-working, committed Churchwardens.
- There is a retired non-stipendiary priest with permission to officiate, who takes services across the Benefice and undertakes some pastoral work. However, he is planning to move to live closer to his children.
- Friendly, welcoming congregations who are ready to try new things.
- An aspiration for a diversity of worship.
- A willingness to be challenged.
- Encouragement, loyalty and support.
- The priest's expenses are paid in full, via a benefice account, administered by a benefice treasurer
- The Rectory at Thorndon, a modern four bedroomed house, with lounge, dining room, study, large

kitchen with utility room, a downstairs WC, and upstairs bathroom. There is a single garage, a tarmac drive and a manageable garden, mainly laid to grass.



*The Rectory at Thorndon*

## Children from Mellis CofE Primary School Council discuss what they would like in their Vicar:-

### Personality:

- not biased (?)
- 'a little bit funny'
- confident
- can speak loudly and clearly

### What they would like them to do:

- include everyone in assembly – possibly a rota for volunteers
- include true-life stories and unfamiliar bible stories
- include stories of the disciples specifically
- more stories from the Old Testament

### They also talked about how they see visits going beyond church services or collective worship:

- inviting children to church for other than whole school services
- come in at playtime or lunchtime and read a story to those who want to join in
- come into lessons or for part of a lesson to see what we are doing
- perhaps come into school like one of our governors does reading with her dogs - read a story to class, for example
- they also said they all want to make Christingles!

## Benefice Strengths:

- We are open to developing a diversity of worship styles, supported by the Ministry Team, to cater for those within the benefice and newcomers.
- There are active churchwardens and assistants, who all take a proactive role in their churches, seeing

their responsibilities in terms of worship and mission, as well as the maintenance of church fabric.

- Each church continues to be managed by its own PCC.
- All eight churches are in relatively good condition.
- There is support from the communities, beyond the church, eg Gislingham and Thorndon have a 'Friends' group.
- Part-time, paid and voluntary admin help will be available to the new incumbent.

## Areas we need help to:

- Develop our work with children and teenagers and encourage and welcome more families into our churches.
- Build on our pastoral care of families and the housebound.
- Serve our communities and be a loving presence in our parishes.
- Build on our existing strengths, become a stronger and more united benefice.
- Develop our online presence.

## About the Benefice

The benefice population totals approximately 4,416 as at 2021 Census (*figures from the National Statistics Office*), as follows:

Parish	Population
Gislingham	1,172
Mellis	563
Stoke Ash with Thwaite (SA 233, Thw 138)	371
Thornham Magna	152
Thornham Parva	51
Thorndon with Rishangles (Th 726, R 92)	818
Wetheringsett cum Brockford	692
Yaxley	596

There is a diverse age range and social mix, although with few other nationalities or ethnic minorities save one Traveller site. Thorndon and Wetheringsett churches have children's activities but in the other parishes children are mainly reached through the schools. There is a general desire among the residents for the church to be present, both buildings and people.

Most houses are privately owned and there are some rented, local authority and housing association properties. Some properties are weekend retreats/holiday lets. A visiting Post Office van comes to Yaxley, Thorndon and Gislingham on a Friday morning (in that order). Most parishes have a Village Hall and Parish Councils or Parish Meetings. There are some excellent hostelrys within the benefice, and we enjoy very good relations with most of those!

There is significant agricultural activity within the benefice, although this provides little actual employment. There are some small, light industries and some people work from home. There is a fast rail link to commute to London from Diss or Stowmarket (about 15/30 mins drive).

There are C of E VC Primary Schools in Gislingham, Mellis, Thorndon and Wetheringsett and the church enjoys good, developing relationships with them all. Some schools bring their children into their local churches for the school's festival services. The clergy go into the schools to lead assemblies and some lay church people act as Foundation Governors. There are pre-schools in Gislingham, Mellis and Wetheringsett and three excellent high schools within easy reach of the benefice – Hartismere High in Eye, Debenham C of E Academy in Debenham and Diss High School just over the county border in Norfolk.

There are Residential/Nursing Homes in Mellis and Yaxley, both of which receive a monthly visit to lead some singing and prayers.

All parishes within the Hartismere part of the Deanery have adopted a policy of communion before confirmation for children of 8 years and upwards after instruction.

As a benefice of eight churches, we recognise that one person cannot be everywhere and the incumbent cannot be present at every church fundraising event or community activity, but his/her presence is very much to be welcomed where it is possible, and the non-church going population still likes to see its Rector taking part in the everyday life of the parishes.

## The Churches (see Appendix I)

Each of the eight parishes has a listed, medieval church building, all of which are in relatively good condition. Some of the churches have a toilet and a kitchen. Several churches have Conservation Areas in their churchyards.

There is more information about the churches on the Simon Knott's Suffolk Churches web site <http://www.suffolkchurches.co.uk>

There are Baptist Chapels at Rishangles and Stoke Ash.

There is a broad representation of Anglican traditions around the benefice, stemming from its relatively recent creation. While some parishes prefer the more liturgical focus of Anglo-Catholic liturgies, others adhere to more evangelical types of worship. It is important that a new Rector is willing to work with genuine enthusiasm across these different traditions.

## Services

At present all churches have at least a service monthly. On the fifth Sunday of the month a joint benefice Eucharist takes place, which rotates around the parishes. See attached sample rotas.

Occasional early services are BCP whilst the majority are Common Worship. Some Services of the Word are led by Lay Elders.

Morning Prayer is said at Gislingham every Wednesday morning.

Telephone Church is one of the positive things that arose out of the pandemic and still continues today. The service is currently a shortened form of a BCP Communion but is a Spiritual Communion, spiritual because only the priest can actually receive the elements, but he conveys them to you, spiritually.

At the moment, the service takes place on a Thursday morning and lasts for 20/25 minutes and afterwards there is an opportunity for a chat. This was particularly welcome during Covid, but it's good to be able to catch up anytime. Sometimes the chat lasts longer than the service!



## Bells

Our benefice has four towers with bells in working order, Thornham Magna (6 bells), Gislingham (8 bells), Yaxley (6 bells) and Stoke Ash (5 bells).

The ringers are drawn from different villages across the area and help each other to have enough ringers for services.

We offer tuition for new learners with teaching accredited by the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART).

## Electoral roll numbers are:

Parish	Electoral Roll
Gislingham	34
Mellis	20
Stoke Ash with Thwaite	9
Thorndon with Rishangles	36
Thornham Magna	13
Thornham Parva	7
Wetheringsett cum Brockford	21
Yaxley	18

## Occasional Offices in 2023:

Parish	Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals
Gislingham	4	0	2 1 Memorial Service 2 Interment of ashes
Mellis	0	1	2 + 1 interment following funeral service in London
Stoke Ash	0	0	1 Burial at Thwaite
Thorndon	1	2	3 Funerals 5 Burial of Ashes
Thornham Magna	0	2	0 Funerals 1 Burial of Ashes
Thornham Parva	1 Baptism blessing	1 Marriage blessing	0
Wetheringsett	0	0	2 1 Burial of Ashes
Yaxley	1	2 + 1 Marriage blessing	
Total	6 + 1 blessing	7 + 2 blessings	12 + 1 Memorial service 1 Interment 9 Burial of Ashes

## Ministry team

We have a stipendiary curate (Lightwave appointed), in the third year of a four year appointment. There is one licensed Reader serving in the benefice. There are six Lay Elders, some of whom are engaged in an informal pastoral role and all six lead Services of the Word. Some of these also take communion to the sick or housebound.

## How the Benefice works together:

- A previous incumbent introduced some Joint PCC meetings, which deal efficiently with administrative matters. The Thornhams' always have joint PCC meetings, sharing one secretary with two treasurers. Thorndon, Wetheringsett and Stoke Ash now meet jointly with one Secretary and three treasurers.
- The Lay Elders are commissioned to work across the whole benefice.
- The worship rota is currently agreed at Benefice Ministry Team Meetings. There is some degree of parishioners' sharing worship in each other's churches.
- There is a readiness within the parishes for people to share their skills, knowledge, ability and experience. The organists play in churches other than their own on a regular basis.
- There is an annual benefice service for the World Day of Prayer.
- The benefice supports local Foodbanks
- Link to CMS (Taiwan)
- The benefice is committed to paying its Parish Share in full.

## In summary

We are excited to welcome a new incumbent who is guided by the Holy Spirit and with whom we can work to bring the love of God to the people in our parishes. We are delighted that having the 'cure of souls' means that the incumbent must spend time with people outside the church family, building bridges into faith and loving communities.

We know that there will be challenges as well as joys. We are praying that God will send us the person of his choice. We are praying already for our new incumbent and will continue to do so when they are in post.



## APPENDIX I

### Information from the individual churches within the South Hartismere Benefice

#### GISLINGHAM - St Mary the Virgin

We have a church membership on the Electoral Roll of 34, with a regular worshipping congregation of 15-20, including members from other parishes in the Benefice. We also have a regular organist, Clare Oven, and a resident Reader, Jean Archdeacon, and an active PCC. We meet our Parish share. We are supported by a large number of volunteers who clean the church, arrange the flowers and open and close the church on a rota basis.



The church has a ring of eight bells, rung before our services, and we have visiting ringers throughout the year. We also have a sound system installed in the church and a toilet. The church is open daily from 10-4.

We are supported by the Friends of St. Mary's who contribute to both the maintenance of the church building and the churchyard, and who hold a very successful Flower Festival each year, and a monthly Coffee & Books morning in the Village Hall, which has become a community event and a valued link with the church.

We currently have two Sunday services a month, followed by refreshments. We also meet for Morning prayer on Wednesdays.



*Gathered around the crib*

Our primary school holds services in the church each term, and our Lightwave curate regularly leads worship in the school and runs a weekly baby and tots' group for under 2's. This has brought several families to church for baptism, and an opportunity to develop the Christian faith. We also held an All Hallows event and a picnic in the churchyard.

Members of the church support the Stowmarket Food Bank, and the Children's Society, and we have a link with CMS (Taiwan), and are represented on the Gislingham United Charity.

We think there is room for development of services and activities in the life of the church, more relevant to modern life, whilst appreciating that the current membership range in age from 60 to 80+. There is a need for teaching the faith and finding ways of sharing the good news with those outside the church family, perhaps through home fellowship groups.

#### Gislingham Morning Prayer

We meet every Wednesday at 9 am throughout the year, almost without fail, and follow the lectionary readings for Morning Prayer. The attendance is usually 4, and the service is led by our Reader, Jean Archdeacon, but in her absence by Rev. Dr. Alan Harding, or the churchwarden. A member of the PCC reads the New Testament set for the day. We include any prayers left on the Prayer board which is used frequently by those visiting the church during the week. Visitors are most welcome to join us.



*Fellowship following Carol Service*



## MELLIS - St Mary the Virgin

The village of Mellis is scattered around what is said to be the largest grazing common in the country, famous as a site where Oliver Cromwell trained his troops in the Civil War. In the centre of the common nestling among trees, is the church, parts of which date from the 13th century although an earlier church on the site is mentioned in the Domesday Book.

From its central position, our Inclusive Church reaches out over the Common to the people of Mellis, and along with the Memorial Hall and the Railway Tavern, acts as a focal point for the village.

Our congregation is friendly and welcoming and we have a reputation for excellent cake and coffee after services! Many people are involved in regular activities within the church such as cleaning (the Holy Dusters!), flower arranging and taking part in services.



*The littlest angel .....*



*Celebration of hedgerows service*

We also have a long tradition of involvement in village events, just this year hosting a monthly Coffee Morning on a Saturday, special services for the local primary school, Ride and Stride, a Tractor Run and playing a part in the village Open Gardens weekend.

A comment in our Visitors' Book reads "This church feels loved" and we aim to ensure that feeling is felt in the village outside the building as well as within its walls.

Mellis is already an Inclusive Church. Because the Common continues to be used by Gipsy Travellers - there are three Traveller horses here now - we would like to explore the initiative started by the two Archbishops last summer of creating a network of Gipsy, Roma, Traveller Friendly Churches.

## Bible Study in the Pub

We meet every month in a local pub for a meal and discussion of sections of the Bible. There are 10 of us about half of whom are non-believers. This always makes for lively discussion and what is particularly enjoyable is the tolerance, good humour and love which permeate the group. These discussions then often spill over into the coffee times which follow the fortnightly cleaning of Mellis Church by the 'Holy Dusters'.



*The annual tractor run in aid of Mellis church*



## STOKE ASH with THWAITE - All Saints

All Saints Church was once thatched and it retains three Norman doorways. Most of the Church is 14th Century and there are 17th Century choir stalls and a covered pulpit. We are a small country church in a very rural setting and surrounded by farmland. As such our congregation is small and with only two members on our PCC, meetings are held jointly with Thorndon and Wetheringsett.

The one service we host a month is followed by tea, coffee and fellowship. We hold a three day Christmas Tree Festival in December and a Spring jumble sale in order to raise funds for the Church.



The Church has good amenities in the form of car parking, a toilet and within the last 12 years, it has benefited from rewiring, redecorating and the installation of pew heaters.



*Christmas Tree Festival – December 2023*

## THORNDON with RISHANGLES - All Saints

The village of Thorndon was mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086) when it had a recorded population of 46. By 1320 the Manor formed part of the dowry of Isabel, Queen of England. By 1337 it had passed into the ownership of Robert de Ufford who stamped his mark on the Manor by building All Saints Church.



The Church now serves a community of over 600 and the village of Thorndon includes a Primary School, a village hall, the Black Horse Pub and a community shop. In addition to regular Acts of Sunday Worship, All Saints provides a place of sanctuary for our local residents. For this reason, the Church is open seven days a week. We host weekly coffee mornings, occasional prayer breakfasts and a Lent Course for the Benefice. In addition, the Church is used as a venue for exhibitions and concerts. One of our most successful ventures has been the creation of TPlus. This was started in 2008 as an informal gathering led by volunteers. Its aim was to provide pastoral care and prayer alongside the provision of coffee and cake. It meets weekly and we now have an attendance of approximately 40.

We have a committed congregation of about 20 which includes some young families. We generally have two services a month, one of which is Holy Communion and the other a Worship for All Service which is led by our 3 Lay Elders. Our aim is to meet the needs of all members of the community and to welcome and openly encourage all ages.

A Friends' Scheme exists to support maintenance of the Church and it is in a good state of repair following much restoration work over the past few years. We are committed to supporting green initiatives and recently received a Bronze Eco Church award.



TPlus



Christingle December 2023

## Cursillo

Interest in Cursillo started in 2017 with three people from Thorndon All Saints. There are now six Cursillistas across the Benefice. Cursillo is a Spanish word which means encounter. The movement was set up by a Roman Catholic Priest at the end of the Spanish Civil War and an important element at that time was the Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. Cursillo has since become an international and ecumenical movement and an annual weekend retreat incorporates the idea of pilgrimage. Cursillo's focus is on study, prayer and action and its aim is to empower its members to share the love of Christ as widely as possible.

Cursillo's strength lies in the way that through the power of the Holy Spirit, it creates a loving community which empowers the laity to do things they would not have thought they were capable of. The annual retreat, held at Leiston Abbey, is led by both laity and clergy with the laity having a prominent role. Once the retreat weekend has been completed, the pilgrims are known as Cursillistas. Other events such as reunions and retreat days are held throughout the year and pilgrims are encouraged to meet in small groups for support.

The Suffragan Bishop of Dunwich, the Rt. Revd. Dr. Mike Harrison oversees Cursillo for our Diocese.



## THORNHAM MAGNA - St Mary Magdalene and THORNHAM PARVA - St Mary's

Thornham Magna and Thornham Parva are the two smallest parishes in the benefice with a combined population of approximately 200. Nevertheless, they are two distinct parishes, both civil and ecclesiastical. The church dedicated to St Mary Magdalene in Thornham Magna dates from the 14th and 15th centuries with much 19th century restoration, whilst St Mary's Thornham Parva has Anglo-Saxon origins, and is known for its wall paintings as well as its 14th century Retable which attracts visitors from across the world.

The two villages are separated by the parkland of Thornham Estate, itself also a tourist destination, as the Henniker family who own it have opened it up to create a popular network of walks. As well as the walks café, each village has a popular pub, and they share a village hall which is a centre of social activity.

Two charities are based in Thornham Magna, within the Henniker estate – 'Beyond the Wall' operates from the Walled Garden and caters for personal development through horticulture for people with learning and other disabilities, and Street Forge Workshops provides training in woodworking skills, again for people with disabilities.



Decorating the church last Christmas

The two PCCs co-operate closely and have been meeting jointly for many years, voting to enlist as Inclusive Churches in 2019. Our small congregation is supplemented from within and beyond the benefice. Post-pandemic there has been a revival of sung forms of worship (Compline, Evensong and Sung Eucharist) and there is enthusiasm to continue to nourish this.



Volunteer day following the Coronation in May 2023

### Music at Thornham

For ten years or more the Thornhams have been home to a concert series featuring a range of visiting professional musicians. The acoustics of the two churches are very good and much appreciated by players who are used to performing in much larger halls. The concerts take place in the warmer months of the year and are gradually re-establishing themselves post Covid.

More details at [musicatthornham.org.uk](http://musicatthornham.org.uk)

Musicians performing in Magna and Parva



## WETHERINGSETT cum BROCKFORD - All Saints

Wetheringsett was mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086) and All Saints Church takes its current form we see today from several centuries of rebuilding work between the 13th and 15th Century's with a thorough restoration in 1857 to serve 1100 parishioners. Today, All Saints Church still serves over 690 people across the parish of Wetheringsett-cum-Brockford.



All Saints looks to play a prominent role in village life through public worship, community events coffee mornings, children's activities and school visits. Many activities are organised including Christmas Tree Festival, Connect Children's activity mornings and Bat night. We play host to a colony of bats and we have just come to the end of the Bat Project where we have worked with the Bat Conservation Trust to monitor and co-exist with a thriving bat population. This is not without its challenges and we have received support for the costs of the annual deep clean.

Wetheringsett has a primary school and a modern village hall.



*New stained-glass windows depicting the life of Richard Hakylett, geographer & former rector of Wetheringsett-cum-Brockford from 1590 until he died in 1616. He is buried in Westminster Abbey*

The church is left open seven days a week and supports a community whose members benefit from a range of worship and who also use the church as a place of sanctuary surrounded by local history and beautiful Suffolk countryside. It aims to meet the needs of all members of the community and welcomes and openly encourages all ages from 0 to over 90. We have a committed congregation who regularly attend the monthly service – which alternates between a service of Holy Communion or a family Worship for All service which is Lay Elder led.

All Saints prides itself on supporting green initiatives and the churchyard is managed in partnership with Suffolk Wildlife Trust where the wildflower meadows are allowed to flourish and where the grass is cut on only a handful of occasions each year.

It has a small yet dedicated PCC is supported by a volunteer team of cleaners and flower arrangers. We maintain a good relationship and work with all the other churches in the Benefice and especially our sister churches of Thorndon and Stoke Ash.



*Coronation celebrations*

The costs of outstanding repairs to the church amounts to approximately £200,000 (Quinquennial Inspection May 2019) The general condition of the church is good with very few urgent works required. We are committed to ensuring that urgent repairs are undertaken and will pick up non urgent repairs when funds allow. All Saint's Church, Wetheringsett seek to embrace change and accept that once long-held views of traditional aspects of church life no longer exist. The PCC is accepting that Church communities and buildings need to move forward with the times and open their doors to embrace new ways of being 'church' which is increasingly not taking place in a traditional way on a Sunday morning as we have the potential to do and be much more.



Findings from the Neighbourhood Plan high-lighted a lack of community facilities within Wetheringsett, which does not have a village shop, a public house, a café or restaurant where traditionally people would meet. Discussions, are in flight about transforming All Saints Church, and exploring all opportunities to create kitchen and toilet facilities as well as a community space.

## **YAXLEY - St Mary the Virgin**

St. Mary the Virgin is a Grade I listed Church. Our War Memorial is Grade II listed. It has been restored and enlarged in the 19th Century.

Within our churchyard is buried Sir Frederick Ashton from the Royal Ballet, along with his sister and mother.

Nikolaus Pevsner describes the north porch of our 12th century church as “One of the most swagger in Suffolk”.

In his book England’s Thousand Best Churches, Simon Jenkins has awarded 1 star to our church.

It is also reported to be one of Suffolk’s seven most interesting churches, East Anglian Daily Times, 2nd

June 2021, because it is home to one of only two remaining Sexton Wheels in the region.

We are on the Heritage at Risk Register – work has been done in the last few years to restore the windows, more is planned and we need support – we have had help from Suffolk Historic Churches Trust. St. Mary’s Church is valued greatly within our village.

We regularly hold fundraising events to raise money for our church in the form of: -

Coffee Mornings; Soup Lunch; Strawberry Tea; Harvest Supper.

We have a Flower Festival every second year on a relevant theme.

We had 90 different flower arrangements to celebrate the Queen’s 90th Birthday, we also celebrated the Queen’s 70th Jubilee.

We have many international visitors, including the Sherman and Yaxley families. One international visitor wrote “Such a special place – a treasure”.



Our church is used by U3A, ACE Cultural Tours, Cambridge and various other groups who come to learn about its historic value. The Arts Society Church Recorders, Diss recently chose our church to discover and document forgotten, hidden and sometimes just plain overlooked British Heritage. The findings were formally presented to our church. We are very grateful to them and find it an extraordinarily valuable document.

We have a very unique book written by our local historian, John Hawes, which he wrote and compiled himself entitled Yaxley’s Dearly Departed. This book is widely used by visitors and many lovely comments have been written about it in our Visitors Book. We also have a 1712 Vinegar Bible. We are in the National Needlework Archive and National Database of Kneelers.

Our congregation is very friendly and welcoming. We have refreshments after our services which is a chance for fellowship. We have 6 active members on our PCC, we have 1 Churchwarden and 1 Assistant Churchwarden, 1 Bell Tower Captain and 1 Lay Elder and Children’s and Families’ Minister.

We look forward to welcoming you into our community.

## Links with Care Homes

Within the South Hartismere Benefice, we have recently started an initiative to reach out to the two local care homes and offer small, informal, friendly religious services to people who may otherwise not be able to access church. These visits have been focused on singing well known carols and hymns with the residents: many have been able to join in and have enjoyed the familiarity of traditional songs, others who have not been able to actively participate, have nevertheless appeared to gain pleasure from listening. We plan to continue to develop these links in the future in whatever format best meets the needs and abilities of the residents.



## APPENDIX II

### SHB (South Hartismere Benefice) Lightwave

Lightwave is about shining God's light in Suffolk. We are a Christian community, meeting in small groups, especially in rural areas. The name comes from the idea of light waves being the way in which light spreads into dark places. Lightwave is committed to shining the light of Jesus through Christian witness and practical service: Our groups are especially involved in combatting isolation and poverty, engage in youth work, care for creation and agricultural chaplaincy.

The foundation of our social engagement is discovering Jesus as the Light of the World. We believe that Jesus calls all people to follow him and is concerned with our everyday lives. We aim to be church for people who don't normally "do church" and our groups may meet in homes, pubs, offices, schools as well as churches.

#### Values

- Service/care for our neighbours-being present in the community, identifying needs and responding
- Listening -to be open to possibilities and create opportunities to listen to God
- Compassion-showing mutual support and compassion through prayer, pastoral care and practical action
- Courage - be willing to give things a try and let go of things that no longer work
- Awareness of and response to environmental issues, Eco church, social justice, prayer and action

#### Aims

Lightwave social engagement comes out of seeking to see where the light of God is shining. Meeting to pray as a small group we intentionally wait on God, to seek where the spirit has gone ahead.

LIGHTWAVE SMALL GROUP: A monthly small home group. Here we use the 4W's to frame our time together. Welcome/worship/word/witness. Each time we meet the elements are shared so that we are **All** growing to **Become** disciples and **Create** Community.

We have social engagement with the prayerful hope of building friendship, creating community and exploring faith

#### Build Friendship

Create a safe place to meet, reduce social isolation, encourage cross generational relationships, connect disparate groups.

#### Create community

Enable mental well-being and a flourishing community, build on existing strong links with our schools, provide a space for teenagers to meet, link with the parish council, village hall committee etc.

#### Explore faith

Increase the churches' understanding of mission and outreach, develop small groups, make links between the 'people's calendar' and church calendar.

cont.....



## SHB Lightwave Groups

THORNDON CHURCH: MONTHLY SUNDAY AFTERNOON CONNECT This includes:

- Cafe Connect-a café style area serving hot drinks and cakes with a quiz, mindful colouring and chat
- Messy Connect-craft activities for all ages related to a Bible story/theme
- Connexions- table talk, prayer stations and prayer requests
- Connected -a short act of worship with drama, storytelling, music, quiz answers and thought for the day

WETHERINGSETT CHURCH: MONTHLY SATURDAY MORNING CONNECT

- Messy Connect-craft activities for all ages related to a Bible story/theme

WETHERINGSETT SCHOOL WEEKLY CONNECT AFTERSCHOOL CLUB

- Cook@Connect, preparing food related to a Bible story.

MELLIS/YAXLEY: Care home \*this is a new opportunity.

THORNHAM MAGNA – Bible reading group at the 4 Horseshoes

GISLINGHAM: GBT (Gislingham Baby and Toddler group)

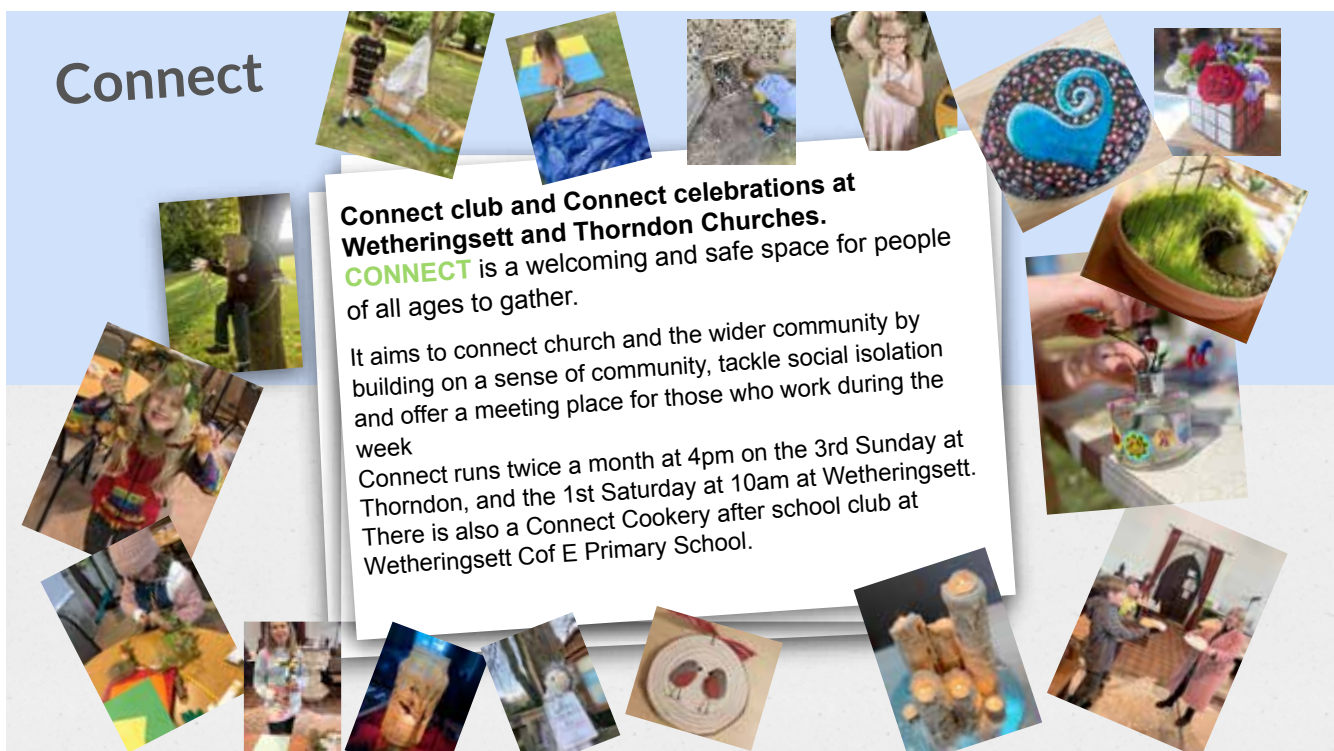
Lightwave roles

2 Lightwave lay family and children's workers.

- Emma based at Wetheringsett
- Karin at Yaxley.

LIGHTWAVE PIONEER CURATE: This role is two-fold, the curate learns the traditional role of parish priest while also looking for ways to pioneer.

This has been explored within Gislingham: Toddler group: start rite; Schools work: house of light event: outside crib service: baby loss awareness week of prayer: allotment community.





## APPENDIX III

### The Deanery

#### Working together to make a difference

Hartismere and Hoxne Deanery was formed in 2021 by the merger of two adjacent deaneries which had worked closely together for many years. It now comprises 39 parishes in six benefices, all very rural apart from the small town of Eye.

Benefices are encouraged to have their own plans for growth, within the overall diocesan vision of ‘flourishing congregations making a difference’, whilst as a deanery our particular objectives are the encouragement and release of gifts and vocations, the development of discipleship and spirituality, community engagement and the growth of work with families.

The deanery is blessed with six SSMs, three lay Readers (including one with PTO), active priests with PTO and committed commissioned lay elders.

Deanery Synod meetings are held three times a year: business is handled efficiently with a minimum of ‘fuss’ but the focus is very much on invited speakers or discussion on a variety of interesting and relevant subjects. Meetings are well attended and there is always time for fellowship over refreshments. Churches of the deanery meet for some shared services such as Ash Wednesday, Ascension and Lammas.

The Assistant Rural Dean convenes monthly chapter meetings for clergy with a couple a year when we invite all the retired priests. The chapter is where we support one another, learn from each other and pray together. We are excited about the future, believing that this is a time for growth. Come and join us in God’s mission in this beautiful part of Suffolk. We look forward to working with you!



A Wedding in Thornham Magna, September 2023

## APPENDIX IV

# The Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

## Where are we?

The Diocese covers the county of Suffolk, excluding the area around Lowestoft in the north-east, and one parish in Essex. It is a mainly rural Diocese with a large number of small villages, plus market towns including Woodbridge, Halesworth, Sudbury and Beccles and the cathedral town of Bury St Edmunds with its historic ruins of the old Abbey. Ipswich is the county town with a population of about 137,000. Suffolk's population is c 650,000. The county embraces historic places of interest such as Sutton Hoo, culture at Snape with the famous annual Aldeburgh music festival, is on the Heritage coast and is a haven for lovers of natural history and birdlife. The busy port of Felixstowe is at the end of the A14 which runs via Cambridge to the Midlands and the A12 which gives access to London and the Norfolk Broads.

## Who are we?

We are often known as 'the Church of England in Suffolk'. The diocesan bishop is the Right Reverend Martin Seeley, and the suffragan bishop is the Right Reverend Dr Mike Harrison. Both work from the Bishop's House in Ipswich. They work together closely to help us shape our vision and strategy, and amongst a plethora of other tasks offer regular teaching mornings to nurture the faith of people in our congregations – and a regular Vlog which can be found on Facebook. There are 3 archdeaconries and over 450 churches where visitors will find a wide range of worshipping styles, from the traditional to contemporary, as well as Fresh Expressions and growing numbers of 'Lightwave' groups for those who haven't connected with traditional church previously. The Cathedral of St Edmund and St James in Bury St Edmunds is the mother church of the Diocese and is proactive in offering support to clergy and parishes including welcoming parishes on pilgrimage. We also work closely with our 88 Church of England primary schools. All this is, of course, supported by a small and committed diocesan staff based in the diocesan office in Ipswich.

## What is our vision?

Our diocesan vision is to be 'Growing in God', aiming to grow 'flourishing congregations making a difference'. This vision was accepted by Diocesan Synod in 2014 and since then we have been focussing on four key priorities:

- Growing in Depth: responding to the call of Christ in every part of our lives
- Growing in Number: drawing the contacts we have into the life of God's kingdom
- Growing in Influence: reaching beyond ourselves in our impact on the wider world
- Growing Younger; building churches whose age-range reflects our communities



Parishes are encouraged to use a simple Mission Action Planning tool to help us all to focus on these priorities and how they might be worked out in each different context. We are trusting God that this vision, underpinned by a commitment to Christian stewardship, will bear fruit as we look to the future.

As part of this vision, we have recently received Strategic Development Funding for two major projects: Inspiring Ipswich, overseen by the Archdeacon of Ipswich which aims to grow the church in Ipswich through church planting and reaching out to those who live in the town, and 'Growing God in the Countryside', overseen by the Archdeacon for Rural Mission. This focusses on nurturing and discipling new Christians through small Lightwave groups and hubs such as the one being established at Bungay. (The Growing in God in the Countryside project plan is available among the documents at [www.light-wave.org/vacancies](http://www.light-wave.org/vacancies))

We have also been part of a pilot scheme exploring how we can use our church buildings more creatively both for those who worship regularly and for the benefit of our communities and many churches have benefitted from this.

We are broadening our vision through a growing partnership with the Diocese of Kagera in Tanzania, with fruitful visits and links being established.

## How can we fulfil our “Growing in God” vision?

We value our huge range of different ministries: we have over 100 stipendiary clergy, plus many SSM and PTO clergy as well as lay and ordained chaplains who can be found in such diverse places as schools, prisons, hospitals, hospices, the army, RAF and the police. Some clergy are ordained to serve in their local benefice through our pioneering ‘auxiliary ordination pathway’ which enables people’s vocations to ordained ministry to be discerned within the Diocese.

All clergy work alongside lay ministers – Readers, elders, and the growing number people exercising recently-introduced licensed ministries: pioneer ministers, evangelists, youth ministers and children’s and family workers. Our ministry deployment principles encourage teams or clusters of lay and ordained ministers to work together so that clergy feel less isolated and ministry resources the mission of the church more effectively. We are just beginning to develop the principle of ‘local ministers’ in our benefices, releasing people’s gifts to serve in their locality.

We are excited about these new developments which are playing an important part in our diocesan vision of Growing in God.

## So, in summary:

As our Growing in God vision states, we aspire to be people who know that ‘God is with us, gathering us as Christ-centred communities, calling us to make Christian disciples, sending us in loving service, empowering us by the Holy Spirit’.



*The Rt Revd Martin Seeley  
Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich*



*The Rt Revd Martin Harrison, Bishop of Dunwich,  
on a visit to South Hartismere*



*Cathedral of St Edmund & St James, Bury St Edmunds*





# South Hartismere Benefice

## DECEMBER 2023



<b>Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	Stoke Ash	11.00-4.00	Christmas Tree Festival	
	Wetheringsett	10.30-12.00	Christmas Tree Festival CONNECT with crafts & cake	EM
<i>Wetheringsett church open daily for viewing until Epiphany</i>				
<b>Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup></b> <i>The 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent</i>	Gislingham	10.30am	Benefice Holy Communion <i>Advent Rings blessed &amp; lit</i>	DN/S Gaze
	Stoke Ash	11.00-4.00	Christmas Tree Festival	
	Thorndon	4.00pm	Christingle Workshop	Team
	Thorndon	5.00pm	Christingle with Carols	DN/TR/BS/JS
<b>Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup></b>	Gislingham	7.00pm	Carol Service	JA
<b>Sunday 10<sup>th</sup></b> <i>The 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent</i>	Mellis	10.30am	Holy Communion	D Mulrenan
	Stoke Ash	3.00pm	Carol Service	DN
<b>Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup></b>	Mellis	7.00pm	Carols by Candlelight	AW/IW
<b>Sunday 17<sup>th</sup></b> <i>The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent</i>	Thorndon	10.00am	'Together at 10' <i>Advent</i> <i>Informal service with refreshments</i>	BS/JS/TR
	Thornham Parva	10.30am	Holy Communion	AD Rich
	Yaxley	10.30am	Worship for All	KS
	Thornham Magna	3.00pm	Carols <i>with the</i> GS Band	KS
	Wetheringsett	6.00pm	Carol Service	EM/EGH/TR
<b>Friday 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	Thornham Parva	7.30pm	Carol Service	AH
<b>Sunday 24<sup>th</sup></b> <i>The 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent</i> <b>Christmas Eve</b>	Gislingham	3.00pm	Crib Service	JA
	Yaxley	4.00pm	Crib Service	KS
	Thornham Magna	11.30pm	First Holy Communion of Christmas	J McCracken
<b>Monday 25<sup>th</sup></b> <b>Christmas Day</b>	Gislingham	9.30am	Morning Praise	AC
	Wetheringsett	10.30am	Holy Communion	S Gaze
	Thorndon	10.30am	Family Service	TR/BS/JS
<b>Sunday 31<sup>st</sup></b> <i>Sunday after Christmas Day</i>	Yaxley	10.30am	Benefice Holy Communion	AH

**Telephone Church BCP Holy Communion is on Thursdays at 11.00am**

### Contact



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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SouthHartismereChurches/>



# South Hartismere Benefice

## MARCH 2024

<b>Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March</b>	Mellis	10.30am	World Day of Prayer	Team
<b>Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March</b>	Wetheringsett	10.30am – 12noon	CONNECT ( <i>Mothering Sunday crafts</i> )	EM/Team
<b>Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> March</b> <i>The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent</i>	Gislingham Thorndon	10.30am 10.30am	Worship for All Holy Communion	JA DN
<b>Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March</b> <i>The 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent</i> <b>Mothering Sunday</b>	Thorndon Mellis Stoke Ash	10.00am 10.30am 10.30am	Together at 10 ( <i>Refreshments &amp; make a Posy to take away only</i> ) Worship for All Holy Communion	Team AW/IW DN
<b>Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March</b> <i>The 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent</i>	Thornham Parva Gislingham Thorndon	10.30am 10.30am 10.30am	Worship for All Holy Communion Worship for All	KS JA/AH TR/BS/JS
<b>Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> March</b> <b>Palm Sunday</b>	Thornham Magna Wetheringsett Yaxley	10.30am 10.30am 10.30am	Holy Communion Worship for All Worship for All	AH TR/EM KS
<b>Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March</b>	Thornham Parva	7.00pm	Sung Compline	KS
<b>Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March</b>	Thornham Parva	7.00pm	Sung Compline	DM
<b>Weds. 27<sup>th</sup> March</b>	Thornham Parva	7.00pm	Sung Compline	KS
<b>Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March</b> <b>Maunder Thursday</b>	Gislingham <b>Deanery Service</b>	7.00pm	Holy Communion	A Vessey D Ekins-Powell
<b>Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March</b> <b>Good Friday</b>	Stoke Ash Stoke Ash	2.00pm 3.00pm	Stations of the Cross Good Friday Liturgy	JA/KS DN
<b>Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March</b> <b>Easter Eve</b>	Thorndon Thornham Magna <b>Deanery Service</b>	10.30am – 12noon 7.00pm	CONNECT ( <i>Easter Hunt</i> ) Easter Eve Holy Communion	EM/Team DM
<b>Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> March</b> <b>Easter Day</b>	Thorndon	10.30am	Benefice Holy Communion	DN

Telephone Church BCP Holy Communion is on Thursdays at 11.00am (NB: Not 28<sup>th</sup>)

Contact:



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