



**West Downland
Benefice Profile
Summer 2022**



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1 Introduction

1.1 Foreword from the Associate Archdeacon of Berkshire

The West Downland Benefice is a rural benefice consisting of 6 parishes and 8 churches. It is a welcoming and friendly place, where local people are faithful and focussed on supporting their local churches and wider communities.

There are many new and exciting things happening as the benefice rebuilds post covid and this house for duty position would be ideal for someone who enjoys rural life, is able to come alongside people and be a part of the local communities.

As the new house for duty associate minister, you will be living in a newly purchased vicarage, in an area of outstanding natural beauty. There is the opportunity for exploring the locality through country walks and for making new friends amongst the villagers. You will be part of a supportive and collaborative team which in turn, is part of a forward-thinking deanery.

I commend this post to you.

Reverend Canon Liz Jackson
Associate Archdeacon Berkshire

Wider Context

The Diocese of Oxford and the Archdeaconry of Berkshire

The Diocese of Oxford serves the mission of the Church in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The Diocese comprises more than 600 parishes, with over 800 churches, serving a diverse population of more than 2 million people located in all types of settings.

Working alongside the Bishop of Oxford we have three Area Bishops who exercise considerable strategic and pastoral oversight for their areas. The Bishop of Reading is the Rt Revd Olivia Graham who has been the Area Bishop since 2019. Stephen Pullin is the Berkshire archdeacon, Liz Jackson is the Associate Archdeacon, and they make up your area team with Ian MacDonald, Discipleship Enabler (Youth specialism), Nicholas Cheeseman, Assistant Director of Ordinands and Rhodri Bowen, Parish Development Adviser.

In the last few years a common vision has emerged for the Diocese of Oxford. The vision is based on the qualities described in The Beatitudes and addresses what kind of church we are called to be: a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world; contemplative, compassionate, courageous.

Together we have identified five focus areas:

- Christian formation and discipleship
- Growing new congregations
- Serving our schools, children and young people
- Environmental Action
- Addressing poverty and inequality

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These are not a description of everything that we do and will not all be reflected in the vision for each parish church, but these priorities are being supported centrally by resources and training. The diocese is inviting benefices and their clergy to share a vision rather than demanding a response. It wants all its clergy to be motivated by hope rather than being driven by anxiety, and thereby to flourish in their ministry.

It is hoped that clergy appointed into the Archdeaconry of Berkshire will want to commit to this vision and encourage their benefices to share in becoming a more Christ-like church for the sake of God's world.

The Deanery of Newbury

Newbury Deanery covers over 150 square miles of the western part of West Berkshire. It includes the urban centres of Newbury and Thatcham, the market town of Hungerford and an extensive rural hinterland. The eleven Benefices encompass 36 parishes ranging in population from over 25,000 to under 100, together with 42 church buildings, and one church which has no building of its own.

In our diverse deanery, we manage to maintain warm relationships between clergy colleagues, and generally try to add to the joys of ministry rather than its burdens, supporting each other through the challenges we face. Our Deanery Plan very much has this in mind, with the intention of building groups of like-minded people to engage with an aspect of life they care about and contribute to our common good.

The plan is currently being revised, but the last plan included a focus on schools (particularly secondary schools which affect several Benefices) and on areas of new development. The current review of our plan, and ongoing discussion is developing a focus on lay vocation and leadership, as well as a growing consciousness of the challenges facing rural communities and churches in the Deanery.

The **West Downland Benefice** is the most rural in the deanery, and contributes practically and spiritually to our common life. Working together with colleagues in different contexts brings greater awareness of our differences rather than pretending we are the same. When small communities and village schools are facing challenges we have no easy answers, but together we are starting to get a better collective understanding of the incidence of rural poverty in the downlands.

1.2 Introduction from Reverend Miriam Keen

Our new Associate Minister will be joining us at a turning point in the life of our benefice. The pandemic has 'taken the roof off' our church buildings and stirred our imagination and ingenuity as we've found new ways to worship together, built new friendships and reflected on the place of faith in our lives. We hope that all those experiences will help us as we seek to rebuild our congregations, support the mission of every parish in our 'family of churches' and explore new ways of blessing our communities.



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We are looking for a priest with energy and flexibility, equally at home with BCP and All Age Worship, who will help us to deepen our faith and enrich our prayer lives. Ministry across six rural parishes is physically, mentally and spiritually demanding but we offer comfortable housing in inspiring countryside with opportunities for outdoor pursuits and excellent central support from our Benefice Administrator & Treasurer.

We hope that you enjoy reading about our churches and will consider whether God is calling you to work with us in the West Downland Benefice.

1.3 Details of the Post

The most rural Benefice in the Newbury Deanery, West Downland Benefice offers the opportunity for a person with energy, drive and enthusiasm to take the next steps in their ministry by joining our friendly and supportive communities as we seek to share the love of Christ in each of our villages.

The Benefice consists of six parishes with eight churches, as well as two churches held by the Churches Conservation Trust.

The Rector and Associate Minister work closely with the PCCs in each parish. They are supported by the Benefice Administrator and Treasurer through a virtual office which deals with fees and annual returns as well as managing communication, in particular the design and circulation of the weekly Pew Sheet.

The parishes have worked together to identify our shared priorities. We hope to:

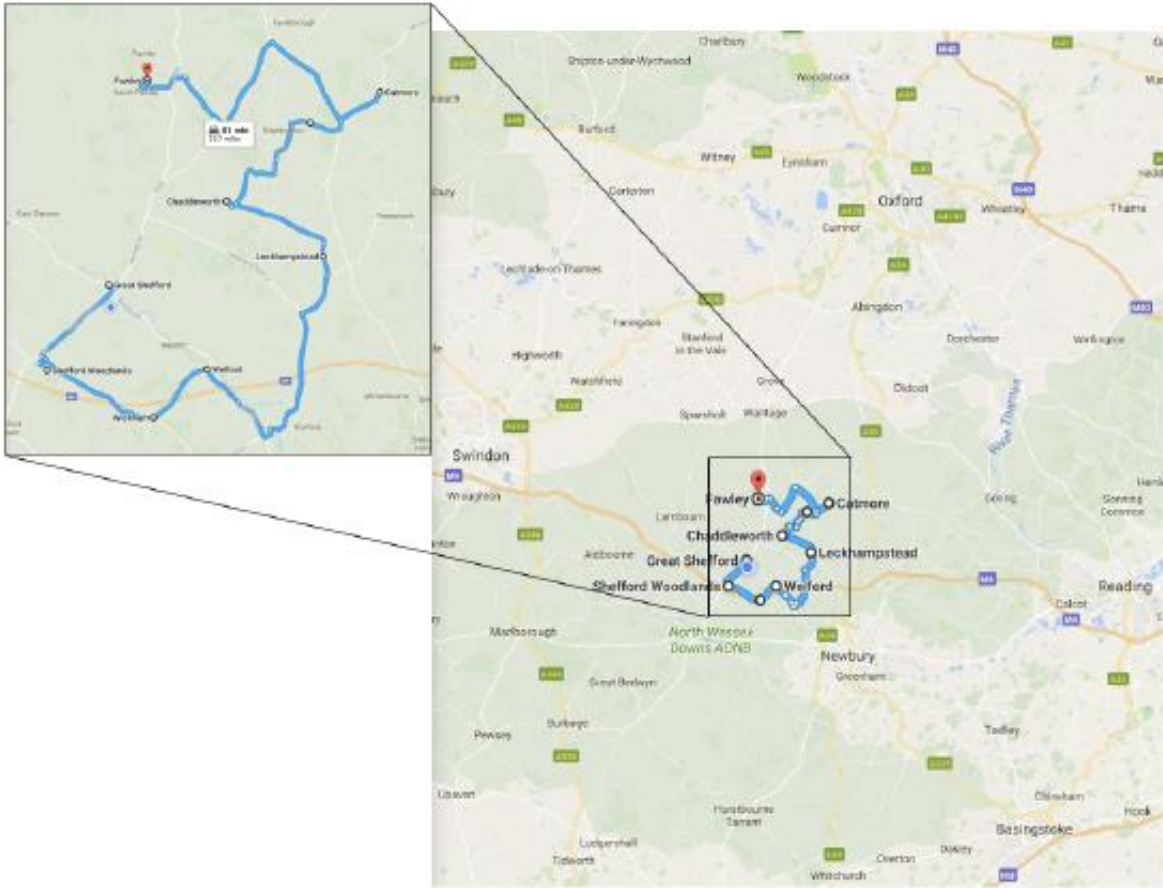
Bring more life and energy into our communities by sharing God's love in our words and actions

Find new ways to use our buildings to build on the foundations laid in the past

Re-shape our parochial organisation so that we have more capacity for 'ministry outside meetings'

Utilise the energy and skills of all God's people, offering training and opportunities for development and leadership.

2 The Benefice



The West Downland Benefice came into being on 1 July 2010 with the existing group of Parishes of Brightwalton with Catmore, Chaddleworth, Fawley and Leckhampstead being joined by the Parishes of Great Shefford and Welford with Wickham. The Benefice works in a group with the East Downland Benefice.

In addition to the eight churches of the Benefice there are two Norman chapels held by the Churches Conservation Trust and lovingly cared for by members of the Benefice. St Margaret's church Catmore and St Thomas' church East Shefford.

Covering an area of 50 square miles, the Benefice is bounded by the A338 in the west, the B4494 in the east, the Ridgeway to the North and the A4 to the South. The 8 villages lie in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and are surrounded by farmland. The majority of the Benefice population are either employed in agriculture and its support industries, or commute to work in other towns, making the majority of villages dormitory villages.

The Benefice Treasurer administers funds from the Parishes to cover all Benefice expenses, including clergy expenses, fees for quiet days, conferences or other undertakings for the development of personal spirituality.

Currently there are six PCCs within the Benefice. The Church Wardens, Treasurers and PCC lay chairs meet three times per year to discuss Benefice-wide strategy. Similarly the PCC Treasurers meet to agree the allocation of the Diocesan Parish Share to each parish. There is not as yet an

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official Benefice-wide council though in 2018-2019 work had begun with the aim of establishing a United Council to better serve our developing vision for a 'family of churches' and ensure a more realistic workload for clergy and volunteers. This has been interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, but it is our intention to integrate our experiences of shared organisation through the pandemic with the work already completed as we restart these conversations in the coming months.

2.1 Services

The majority of Sunday services within the Benefice are Holy Communion. There are also regular lay-led services catering for a range of needs: 'Cafe Church' and 'Together @ Ten' in Great Shefford cater for families and those who prefer a short service with a relaxed style, and BCP Matins in Wickham offers a traditional language service in the late morning. We have two authorised lay ministers who lead occasional services of Communion by Extension. We hold Evening Prayer every Wednesday. This is currently on Zoom, but during the summer months the service takes place in the churches in turn. The service includes a discussion of the readings for the day.

Historically Sunday services have been organised on a monthly rota that offers each parish two clergy-led services per month, plus a united service on fifth Sundays. However during the Covid 19 pandemic we have innovated with services styles, locations and technology in order to be able to continue to worship whenever possible as a gathered community who enjoy singing together during worship. We are now re-establishing Sunday services inside church buildings but are also offering 'Zoom from Church' for those who cannot be with us on site. Interim patterns of services are in place during the vacancy with the aim of returning to four clergy-led services per Sunday once our new Associate Minister joins us. For a sample of the various service styles currently in use see Table 1 in Appendix 1.



In addition to regular weekly patterns of worship 'Songs of Praise' services accompany events and occasions in the parishes e.g. during the snowdrop season at Welford, as the finale to Great Shefford Open Gardens, and in the smaller churches and chapels as a celebration of high summer. Some services are held with East Downland Benefice. These include Ash Wednesday, Ascension Day, All Saints Day, All Souls Remembrance and Thanksgiving Service, Advent Sunday Carol Service.

The Diocesan Communications team recently interviewed us about Zoom from Church. The article can be found here:

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/news/live-streaming-in-west-downland.php>

2.2 Strengths, Challenges, and Hopes for the Future

Current Strengths of the Benefice

- Committed and enthusiastic volunteers
- Willingness to adapt to circumstances and recent experience of fast-paced change in order to work towards shared goals
- Service options available every Sunday
- Good primary schools that welcome the work of clergy and foundation governors
- Beautiful and inspiring rural countryside
- Bells are kept ringing in three towers in the Benefice by the joint efforts of ringers across the Benefice
- Determination to maintain church buildings and to keep them at the heart of each community
- Stronger friendships across the parishes forged through shared worship during the pandemic
- Meetings of Benefice Churchwardens and Treasurers that enable ideas and experience to be shared and deliver increased support for PCC officers in the parishes
- Use of straightforward technology to enhance worship opportunities
- Excellent administrative support
- Good service for baptism, wedding and funeral families.

Future Challenges for the Benefice

- Streamlining the governance structure of the Benefice so that the time spent in meetings is kept to a minimum and the talents of individuals are invested in the life and mission of the parishes.
- Recruiting sufficient officers for each PCC
- Developing lay leadership and participation so that skills are utilised across the Benefice
- Encouraging people from the individual parishes to travel to other churches to take advantage of the choice of services on offer and to support one another.
- Growing the United Benefice services into occasions that people look forward to attending
- Building on the work done in primary schools and in Café Church through further engagement with children and young people
- Nurturing the communities based in each church as the basis of a strong Benefice Community
- Involving whole village communities in the life of the church by inviting them to join groups like bell-ringers, choirs and to attend social events.
- Continuing to develop our use of technology so that each parish is confident and capable.

Hopes for the Future of the Benefice

- Improve and develop the pastoral care we offer within our communities
- Nurture a truly united Benefice by supporting each other through joint organisation, pastoral work, events and services
 - Increase youth involvement in church activities
- Improve and develop the church buildings to be of greater use to the wider community

2.3 Ministry in Church Schools

2.3 Schools Work

Schools work is a very important part of the mission of the United Benefice and is seen as a chance to engage not only with the children and staff in the schools but also with the parents of the children. There are 4 church primary schools in the Benefice:

Chaddleworth St Andrews & Shefford C.E.(V.C.) Federated Primary schools (both sites are used but the majority of the day to day teaching takes place in Shefford School);

Brightwalton C.E. (V.A.) Primary School;

Welford with Wickham C.E. (V.A.) Primary School (part of The Kite Federation with Stockcross Primary School which is in the East Downland Benefice).

The approximate combined number of children in all the schools is 250.

The Rector is an ex-officio Governor of Brightwalton Primary School and supports the Governors of Chaddleworth St Andrew & Shefford Primary Schools in their work to develop the Christian ethos and distinctiveness of the schools.

The ex-officio Foundation Governor role for clergy in The Kite Federation is shared with East Downland on a three yearly rota and our new clergy colleague will have the opportunity to become a Foundation Governor of Welford and Wickham Primary School. The clergy are warmly welcomed into all of the Benefice schools with opportunities to lead Collective Worship as well as offering pastoral care to the whole school community. Foundation Governors of each school are active in their governance roles and in volunteering their time and skills to assist in activities for the children and in working parties to improve the schools environments. All the schools visit the churches and use them for the curriculum as well as for worship. As well as Collective Worship led by the clergy there are services led by the children including Harvest Festival, Christingle, Carols, Easter, and Leavers' and End of School Year celebrations.



"The school is very privileged to be part of not one but two beautiful churches. Being part of the church community gives our school real heart and the support that Miri and her congregation have been able to offer our parents when they have really needed it has been truly special"

In the children's own words...

"It's a place that makes our nativity feel really special"

3 Description of the Role

Role Title	Associate Minister
Type of Role	House for Duty
Name of the Benefice	West Downland
Episcopal area:	Reading
Deanery: Archdeaconry:	Newbury: Berkshire
Service:	This role falls within the Clergy Terms of Service formally known as Common Tenure. The Archdeacon of Berkshire is the designated person by the Bishop of Oxford to issue the Statement of Particulars for the post holder.
Key contact for Clergy Terms of Service:	Archdeacon of Berkshire
Accountability	Priests share with the Bishop in the oversight of the Church. Whilst, as an office holder, the individual is expected to lead and prioritise work in line with the purpose of the role, they are encouraged to inform the Archdeacon and Church Wardens about any issues exceptional or otherwise that have the potential to affect ongoing delivery of ministry
Additional Responsibility	N/A

General:

- A. To exercise the cure of souls shared with the bishop in the West Downland Benefice in collaboration with colleagues, including the praying of the Daily Office, the administration of the sacraments and preaching
- B. To have regard to the calling and responsibilities of the clergy (as described in the Canons, the Ordinal, the Code of Professional Conduct for the Clergy) and other relevant legislation including
 - bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation and making him known to those in your care
 - instructing the parishioners in the Christian faith
 - preparing candidates for baptism and confirmation
 - diligently visiting the parishioners of the benefice, particularly those who are sick and infirm
 - providing spiritual counsel and advice
 - consulting with the Parochial Church Councils on matters of general concern and importance to the benefice
 - bringing the needs of the world before God in intercession
 - calling your hearers to repentance and declaring in Christ's name the absolution and forgiveness of their sins
 - blessing people in God's name
 - preparing people for their death
 - discerning and fostering the gifts of all God's people
 - being faithful in prayer, expectant and watchful for the signs of God's presence, as he reveals his kingdom among us
- C. To share in the wider work of the deanery and diocese as appropriate, for the building up of the whole Body of Christ

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Key responsibilities specific to the local situation

In line with our hopes for the benefice we are looking for someone to:

- build on the foundation of neighbourliness in our communities to further develop pastoral care and to encourage discipleship through small groups and one to one conversation.
- promote collaboration between the parishes through joint organisation, pastoral work, events and services so that energy is focussed on ‘ministry outside meetings’
- encourage increased youth involvement in church activities.
- support PCCs as they improve and develop church buildings to be of greater use to the wider community.

The key responsibilities listed above may be supported by long and short term objectives to be agreed between the post holder and the incumbent.

Other responsibilities

- Participate in the Bishop’s Ministerial Development Review scheme and engage in Continuing Ministerial Development
- Carry out any other duties and responsibilities as required in line with the benefice needs.
- Take care for their wellbeing including health and safety and building a good repertoire of spiritual and psychological strategies.

Benefice Summary

Benefice:	West Downland
Patron(s):	Bishop of Oxford, Dean & Chapter of Westminster, Mrs Kirsten Loyd
PCCs:	6 - Brightwalton with Catmore, Chaddleworth, Fawley, Great Shefford, Leckhampstead and Welford with Wickham
Churchwardens:	7
Ministers:	1, the Incumbent Revd Miriam Keen
Benefice paid staff:	1, the Benefice Administrator & Treasurer, and Rector’s PA Mrs Sarah Youldon
Buildings:	8 churches
Churchyard(s):	7
Resolution A,B,C:	None
Church Tradition	Central
Pastoral Reorganisation Proposals	Currently none but work is underway to explore how established collaborations may be formalised to streamline governance of the parishes

Key Contacts for the Role - Generic and specific to the role

Groups & Committees	In the Benefice	Support Structures
The PCC Deanery Chapter Deanery Synod Deanery Standing Committee Trustees of the Saunders, Wynn and Coventry Educational Foundation	Church Wardens Ministerial Colleagues, including the Incumbent Head teachers of local schools Benefice Administrator & Treasurer	Area Dean Area Bishop Archdeacon Associate Archdeacon Staff at The Diocesan Office with key responsibilities for various aspects of supporting

3.1 Person Specification

Qualifications/Training

Essential

- Ordained priest within the Church of England, or a Church in communion with it, or a Church whose orders it recognises.
- Have satisfactorily completed Initial Ministerial Education.

Desirable

- Have completed a recognized course of study in the development of personal discipleship.

Experience

Essential

- Engagement with, and pastoral support for, people of all ages.
- Collaboration with PCCs and lay leaders.
- Developing discipleship through small groups and one to one conversation.

Desirable

- Developing lay leadership of mature and thoughtful all age worship.
- Use of simple technology to facilitate and further develop worship.
- Active engagement with local schools.
- Ministry in a multi-parish and rural context/

Knowledge/Skills and Competencies

Essential

- The ability to work to a Safeguarding Policy.
- Ability to preach well in a variety of styles and formats to a broad range of listeners with varying outlooks, ages and understanding.
- Ability to identify and respond to opportunities for mission.
- Confidence to drive on single track roads in all conditions.

Desirable

- Collaborative working, especially with volunteers and local community organisations.
- Ability to organise resources effectively to meet a large number of demands.

General Attributes

Essential

- Able to lead worship in a range of styles and forms including Fresh Expressions, Common Worship and BCP.
- An appreciation of the missional opportunities provided by pastoral offices.
- Evidence of a deep prayer life and ability to draw on a wide range of spiritual resources.

Desirable

- A love of the countryside, and a commitment to care for it
- A passion for learning and personal development

4 The Local Area

4.1 The Rectory



This post benefits from a newly purchased rectory situated in the centre of Great Shefford and within the Lambourn Valley.

The house is modern, spacious and well presented with 3 ensuite bedrooms, 3 reception rooms plus an open plan kitchen / dining room. There is also an enclosed garden with patio area, large driveway and garage.



Approximate Floor Area = 208.2 sq m / 2241 sq ft
Including Limited Use Area (9.6 sq m / 103 sq ft)
Garage = 14.8 sq m / 159 sq ft sq ft
Total = 223.0 sq m / 2400 sq ft sq ft



Great Shefford itself has lots to offer with popular traditional pub complete with riverside terrace, village shop and primary school. There are many miles of open countryside to enjoy and the village is surrounded with beautiful walking and cycling. [Great Shefford village website](#)

4.2 Transport Links

There are limited bus services throughout the Benefice. The nearest railway stations are in Newbury, Hungerford, Kintbury and Didcot. The M4 to the South of the Benefice, and within 2.5

miles of the rectory gives good links to London and to Wales and the West Country. The A34 gives good links to Oxford and the Midlands, and to Southampton. National Bus Services stop at Chieveley Services and Newbury Bus Station.

4.3 Shops

There is a village shop and Post Office in Great Shefford, as well as a fuel station and auto centre. There is a Farm Shop with Coffee Shop just off the B4494 north of Brightwalton. Otherwise shopping centres are in Newbury, Wantage and Hungerford. Further afield there are major shopping centres in Reading, Swindon and Oxford.

4.4 Schools

There are 2 pre-schools in the Benefice: Brightwalton Preschool Nursery and Great Shefford Under Fives. Both have associated mother and baby groups.

There are 4 Church of England Primary Schools within the Benefice: Brightwalton C.E. (V.A.) Primary School, Welford with Wickham C.E. (V.A.) Primary School and Chaddleworth St Andrew's with Shefford Federated C.E. (V.C.) Primary Schools. All are graded 'good' by Ofsted.

Young people from the Benefice attend a number of local state secondary schools:

John O'Gaunt School in Hungerford (Great Shefford and Fawley catchment)

Trinity School in Newbury (Welford catchment)

The Downs School in Compton (Chaddleworth, Brightwalton and Leckhampstead catchment)

King Alfred's School in Wantage.

Young people also attend a number of independent day and boarding schools in the area and further afield.

4.5 Healthcare

Local doctors' surgeries are located in Lambourn, Chieveley and Compton. There are hospitals in Newbury, Swindon, Oxford, Reading and Basingstoke, each easily accessible by car and with their own areas of expertise.



4.6 Local Culture

The local Amateur Dramatics group, the Boxford Masques, put on bi-annual summer performances. The 2021 production of Bellerophon was held at Boxford Playing Fields. Annual summer art and music festivals are held in Hungerford and Newbury. Local theatres include the Watermill and the Corn Exchange Theatres in Newbury, the Wyvern Theatre in Swindon, The Hexagon in Reading, and the New Theatre in Oxford, as well as easy access to London's West End by both train and road. Less formal music venues can be found in the form of the Swindon Arts Centre, and Arlington

Arts in Newbury. Additionally, there are cinemas in Newbury, Basingstoke, Swindon and Reading.

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Nearby attractions for all the family cover interests from steam trains at Didcot, National Trust properties Ashdown House in Lambourn and Basildon Park in Reading, as well as other private houses such as Highclere Castle. The Snowdrops at Welford Park, The Living Rainforest at Hermitage, the Cotswold Wildlife Park in Burford, Bucklebury Farm Park, and The Nature Discovery Centre in Thatcham are just a few of the attractions catering for nature and wildlife lovers of all ages.



5. Parish Profiles

5.1 Great Shefford with Shefford Woodlands

Population: c. 940

This village nestles in the Lambourn Valley at the foot of the rolling Berkshire Downs with the River Lambourn, a renowned chalk-stream, running through. It lies just under 2 miles north of Junction 14 of the M4 motorway which provides direct access east to London and west to the West Country and Wales.

The well-appointed Village Hall provides the venue for many village clubs and groups and a Social Club with a licensed bar adjoins it and is a popular meeting place. The groups and clubs using the Village Hall include the village Under 5's, Toddlers and Mothers, a Sewing Bee Group and the village craft club. Community events such as the Macmillan Cancer Coffee morning and the Church Fundraising Groups Harvest Supper, Lent Lunches and Quiz Evenings are also held in the village hall as and when guidelines allow. The village also has a thriving church choir consisting of singers of all ages. The choir has been unable to practice in recent times but hopes to start up again when circumstances allow and new additions will then be welcome.

There is a Cricket Club that hosts matches and provides coaching for all ages at the beautiful Welford Cricket Ground nearby. Allotments on the edge of the village are fully cultivated and support the Gardening Club at the Primary School.

Shefford Woodlands is a hamlet that lies one mile from Great Shefford and is part of St Mary's, Great Shefford Parish. St Thomas' Church at East Shefford is in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust, and holds one service a year, a candle-lit carol service at Christmas.



St Stephen's, Shefford Woodlands

Church Life

The two churches have services in accordance with the Benefice service rota with St. Mary's Great Shefford being on the later service rota and St. Stephen's Shefford Woodlands being on the earlier service rota.

On the third Sunday, young families with children and babies regularly attend Cafe church which is a lay-led service. This service starts with 'breakfast' followed by a half hour service aimed at children.

The church supports The Helen & Douglas House children's hospice and 'Loose Ends', both local charities.

Strong traditions include the Duck Derby, held on the River Lambourn for the last 25 years on Easter Saturday in aid of the churches, and the annual Harvest Supper, a very popular fundraising event.



The Church Buildings

St Mary's Church is a beautiful Grade II listed flint building, dating from around 1200 with later additions. It is approached through a fine avenue of lime trees, and has one of only two round towers in Berkshire, and the furthest west in Britain. The church is surrounded by a well-kept churchyard, still in use, in which stands an impressive listed War memorial.

In 2012 the six bells were rehung and rung for the first time in 50 years, a wonderful fund raising achievement by the whole community. There is now a weekly ringing practice, held on a Wednesday evening, as well as ringing for services.

St Stephen's Church, Shefford Woodlands, is the daughter church to St Mary's since its adoption by the Church of England in 1910. Originally built as a Wesleyan Chapel in 1837, it fell into disuse towards the end of the 19th Century and was acquired and enlarged by Captain Burmester, a parishioner. It is a simple chapel with fine wood carving inside, notably the names of the young men who worshipped there and lost their lives in the First World War are carved on the backs of the pews. St Stephen's was granted Grade II listing in October 2015.

Current Strengths and Future Hopes

Strengths:

- Enthusiastic lay involvement in introducing new service styles
- Church open all day every day and well supported by active groups
- Well supported festival services held in St Stephen's church, including a popular outdoor nativity complete with donkey!

Hopes:

- Develop support for the Pre-school and the Primary school
- Attract younger people to be involved in church life
 - Meet the needs of the older parishioners

5.2 Welford with Wickham

Population: c. 515



Lying approximately 60 miles west of London and within easy reach, via the M4 and regular train services, to both London and the West Country, the Parish of Welford extends to over five thousand acres and includes the larger villages of Welford and Wickham and the smaller villages of Weston, Easton, Hoe Benham and Halfway. The nature of the geography has tended to fragment the Parish. It extends for five and a half miles from North to South between Leckhampstead and the Great Western railway and for an average of two miles from West to East, between Shefford Woodlands and Boxford. The River Lambourn runs through the Parish as does the M4.

Within the parish are two thriving public Houses, one in Wickham and one in Halfway. Wickham Village Hall provides a venue for many local activities. It is run by a Hall committee and events include Whist Drive, Parish Council Meetings and Exhibitions. Welford with Wickham Church of England Primary School was built in 1857 for 190 pupils. Having had two major extensions, the school is still flourishing and is now attended by around 100 pupils. As a testament to its success, over 50% of its pupils are attracted from outside the catchment area.

Church Life

Christmas services are very well attended with a Crib Service and 10pm service on Christmas Eve and an 11am service Christmas Day. These regularly attract over 50 people. The open air Remembrance Service is also very popular as is the school Harvest Festival and Christingle Service.

The Church Building

Unique features of the Parish are its two churches: a Parish Church and a Chapel of Ease. St Gregory's Church at Welford (Norman), was built on the foundations of an earlier Saxon church. Its circular spire and tower is one of only two round towers in Berkshire. St Swithun's Chapel of Ease, at the top of Wickham Hill, is originally 12th Century. The original church was built on to a much older Saxon watch tower. The tower is one of the best examples of Saxon workmanship in the country, is the oldest in Berkshire and is referred to in many reference books.

St Swithun's Chapel is most famous for its papier-mache elephant heads, mounted in the roof of the north aisle. These were purchased at the Paris exhibition in 1862. They have such names as Fortitude, Docility and Strength - all good Victorian virtues. People travel from afar to see these creatures. The principal concern of the PCC over recent years has been the deterioration of both churches' structural condition. In order to address this, a professional fundraiser was appointed in 2015 to source the necessary funds to guarantee the future of our churches.



The immediate success of this move was the award of nearly £85,000 from The Listed Places of Worship Roof repair fund. As a result, the whole of the south facing roof of Wickham Church was replaced together with many roof beams. Further restoration work consisted of the re-rendering of the south elevation and the considerable restoration of some beautiful stained glass windows. In 2016 a further £80,000 was obtained from various grant making sources. The Friends of Wickham Church are actively fund raising locally.

St Gregory's Church Welford, considered a lesser priority by our architect in 2014 (when this project started), is now in serious need of major work. A bid is in to the Heritage Lottery fund to help, which has passed the first stage. There is an active local fundraising group called Friends of Welford church, who have organised major fundraising events with more being planned. The PCC is in constant discussion regarding new and original ideas for future church use, involving the churches in the community and encouraging: further school use of the churches, involvement of the Newbury Spring festival, organising concerts and fund raisings in the churches to ensure they are safeguarded and secure for future generations.

Current Strengths and Future Hopes

Strengths:

- Enthusiastic and dedicated PCC
- Both churches in beautiful surroundings

Hopes:

- Increased involvement of the local school in use of the church
- Major repair programme to secure the future of our churches
 - Greater capacity for pastoral visiting

5.3 Brightwalton with Catmore

Population: c. 330



The Parish of Brightwalton with Catmore is located at the north end of the Benefice, in the Berkshire Downs near the Ridgeway and in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The main village is quite dispersed with houses around the main street as well as at The Common, The Green, Pudding Lane, The Holt and Southend, each of which is separated by fields.

Catmore is a small community of 13 dwellings in the north-east corner of the parish, 10 of them in the hamlet of Lilley. As an ecclesiastical parish it has been joined to Brightwalton since 1934; but as a civil parish it is still separate.

In Brightwalton, there is a school and a village hall. The school is a Church of England Primary School with c.100 pupils ages 4 to 11 years old. It draws pupils from a wide area due to its consistently good OFSTED rating.



The village hall is large and well equipped and was extensively refurbished as a millennium project. Brightwalton pre-School nursery runs in the hall from Monday to Friday and was recently rated outstanding by OFSTED. The hall is regularly used by groups such as the Young Farmers, children's dance classes and a table tennis club. There is a large playing field adjacent to the village hall. The main annual event in the village each year is the fete, which draws many from the village together. For the past few years, pre-covid, residents have been running Pop Up Drinks evenings on a Friday every other month. There are normally a few other fund raising activities organised for the school or church each year.

As part of the ASPIRE project (All Saints, Project in Reaching Everyone) and together with the Parish Council fundraising is currently well underway to raise money to employ a community coordinator. The idea is that this person would improve the lives of those in the village who might be feeling vulnerable, lonely, or isolated and help bring the village together. It is expected that this person will host a number of gatherings such as simple lunches, coffee mornings or clubs.

Church Life

Regular services are held in All Saints. In most months there is a 9 am BCP communion and a family communion at 10.30 am. Each year there is a village carol service and a harvest celebration attended by around 50 people. The school holds a service each term. St Margaret's Catmore holds three services a year: an Evensong at Pentecost, a Harvest Festival and a hugely popular Carols by Candle-light on Christmas Eve.

The Church Building

All Saints Church in Brightwalton is large for the size of the community and is well maintained. It was designed by the renowned Victorian architect G E Street. It is in the gothic style, with oak pews and choir stalls, and seats about 200. There are some fine stained glass windows, a fine alabaster reredos and some features from the old church including a Norman font and two of the bells. It sits in a large churchyard adjacent to the school. It has 6 bells which are regularly rung before services by an active group of bell ringers. In 2021 the first part of works to reorganise the church was completed. Several rows of pews were removed from the back of the nave. A servery and loo were installed at the far back and there is space in front of this for people to congregate behind the pews. It is hoped that this area will be used for village functions such as those arranged by the proposed community worker. Stackable chairs have been ordered for when it is needed for services. The organ was removed and a new organ bought. This is situated at the top of the nave on the south side. The project to raise money for these alterations, known as 'ASPIRE', is ongoing and the plan is to build a meeting room above the vestry and improve the lighting.



Christmas Carol Service, Brightwalton



Candlelit Christmas Carols, Catmore

Catmore has a church, St Margaret's, a gem of a little Norman church built in 1175 and Grade 1 listed. It is no longer in regular use and is vested in the Churches Conservation Trust. It has no electricity and lighting is by candles only.

Current Strengths and Future Hopes

Strengths:

- Increasing attendance at village carol service and harvest celebration
- An enthusiastic Aspire Project committee who are working closely with the Parish Council and wider community to re-order the church and recruit a part time community worker.
 - A fine church in the heart of the village
 - Local school that wants to use the church more

Hopes:

- Transforming itself from a place of only worship to a range of new uses for the community
- Encouraging more people into the church - re-invigorate regular church attendance

5.4 Leckhampstead

Population: c. 375



The population of the charming village of Leckhampstead has not changed significantly since 1851, the date of the first recorded census. The population includes a mix of younger and teenage families, retired couples and the elderly (many alone).

The village consists of a scattering of farms and older houses, the church, village hall and green. In recent years 10 low cost houses were built within the village to support families of local residents.

Community spirit within the village is strong as shown by well supported clubs and activities taking place in the village, including Coffee Club in the hall, Summer Fete, Women's Institute and the Gardening Club. Social events organised by the Village Hall and the church are well attended and enjoyed by all.

There is no school in the village, but there are several local primary schools nearby and a school bus runs to local secondary schools.

Visit the website
www.stjamespcc.com



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Our core congregation averages 25 people who are mostly over 50, however a number of young families and 'returners' who have moved away from the village also attend as they enjoy our services and the welcoming worshipping community. Many more people attend the Festivals and Community services. Coffee and a chat after a service has become part of the Leckhampstead tradition.

The congregation of regular worshippers is small but the church enjoys great support from the wider community, whether members of the Church of England or not. In the recent parish survey 94% of the parish considered the church to be 'important' to the village.

The Church Building

St James' Church is a prominent feature of the village giving character and a central focus to the village. The Church is Grade 2*listed and was designed by the architect Samuel Teulon in 1859. The brick and flint church sits within a secluded graveyard of approximately one and a half acres overlooking the North Wessex Downs. The graveyard is open to all in the village, whatever their faith, which maintains personal, family and historical links to village life.

The PCC and the Church Restoration Committee have a clear 10-year plan to renovate the church and provide a building that can sustain itself and the church community into the future and to provide the base to grow the worship community in the parish.

St James has recently successfully completed two phases. Phase 1, the restoration of the front porch and boundary wall was completed in 2018, costing £15,000. Phase 2 replaced the church roof and resolved major structural movement in the building and was completed in May 2021, costing £260,000. The building has since been removed from the National Risk Register.

The final phase of the plan is to improve the internal church facilities. This is proposed to be completed in 2 parts – Phases 3 includes a new heating system, levelling the floor to remove trip hazards, flexible seating and a toilet and will cost £138,000. The final Phase 4 - includes a kitchen servery and gallery, costing £77,000. This will allow St James the ability to broaden its styles of worship and improve community spirit and cohesion.



A faculty from the Oxford Diocese has been approved for all phases of the Project.

Current Strengths and Future Hopes

Strengths:

- The church is open at all times, to all faiths, to everyone in the parish and is an important part of the local community and village life, with the village defibrillator being kept in the church.
 - Supported by keen and enthusiastic PCC and active Friends of St James' group
 - Clear vision and plans for the future.

Hopes:

- Church building – following replacement of the roof in 2021 plans are now in place to install central heating and a toilet.
- Committees – to maintain the goodwill and enthusiasm created through the project and build on community engagement and support within the parish

5.5 Chaddleworth



Population: c. 490

The village of Chaddleworth lies just off the A338 towards Wantage just below the Ridgeway. The population live in some 235 dwellings which include a number of affordable houses built on Glebe land that is on a 190 year lease from the Diocese. Those who are employed in the village work on one of the 4 large estates. Some people work in Newbury, Wantage and Hungerford, but the majority travel to London, Didcot, Oxford and the Bristol area for work.

On the edge of the village is RAF Welford, a US Air Force Ordnance Base and next door to it is the West Berkshire Golf Club.

The village has a Village Hall with children's play area and football pitch. The Ibex Pub offers a good Restaurant and Bed and Breakfast facilities. Chaddleworth St Andrew's C.E. Primary School is federated with Shefford C.E. Primary school, with one Headteacher and one Governing Body.

The village has a group, Chaddleworth Entertainments, who run major events in the village. This has included the Village Fete and an Annual Easter Egg Hunt. There is also an annual Pensioners' Christmas Lunch, funds for which are raised by the Harvest Auction. Many of the young people in the village aged 10 - 25 belong to the Shefford Young Farmers Club. There is also a cricket club.

The Saunders Wynn and Coventry Educational Foundation has been set up to offer financial help for educational needs for anyone living in the Parish up to the age of 25. The Rector and Associate Priest are both Trustees of this Trust.

Church Life

There are two services a month but attendance has fallen despite the commitment and support of a few regulars. However, during the year the attendance at Harvest, Remembrance, Easter, and Christmas is considerably higher and reflects the fact that many families are away at weekends or are taking their young to music, drama or sport on a Sunday. Once a year there is a Pet Service, normally held outside the Village Hall and there has been a successful Flower Festival.



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The Church Building

It is likely that there was a church on the present site before the Norman Conquest. In 1160 Ralph De Chaddleworth gave the church and Rectory to the Priors of Poghlee on the founding of their Priory. In 1540 Henry VIII gave the church to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster in exchange for land in London. The Tower was built in the 13th Century and the present Chancel was added 150 years ago. There are 4 bells that are regularly rung for services and Weddings and a small one manual Organ. Two private chapels were added by local families - the Wroughtons and the Blandys, but they are no longer used as Chapels. There is a lot of work required to repair the masonry and windows. The boiler has been replaced in recent years and effectively heats the building.

The church has a large churchyard which is regularly visited by many in the village. There is a candle stand in the church for those who wish to enter the church and light a candle for those who have died. There is a public footpath through the churchyard, which also brings visitors in for some time of reflection and to light a candle.

The Village War memorial is at the opposite end of the village from the church and on Remembrance everyone walks from the church to the Memorial to place their wreaths.

Current Strengths and Future Hopes

Strengths:

- A well heated church that is popular for festival services and was well used during the pandemic restrictions.
 - A small dedicated group of parishioners who keep things running.
 - Bellringers from the village and surrounding churches.
- Members of the community who take their turn at flower arranging, brass cleaning and also cleaning the Stained Glass Windows.

Hopes:

- Bring in a wider group to join the small dedicated PCC.
 - Greater engagement with all the community.
 - The development of greater activity with young people.
- The restarting of the Afternoon Club a monthly gathering that offers tea, cake and conversation to anyone in the village who is free to attend.

5.6 North & South Fawley, and Whatcombe

Population: c. 165



The parish consists of North and South Fawley and Whatcombe. It is uniquely situated in the middle of the Berkshire Downs, in an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, five miles south of Wantage. It has a no through road which makes it a quiet and peaceful place to live. There are many walks on the doorstep and you can reach the ancient path of the Ridgeway from the village. There are roughly 68 houses, split between North, South and Whatcombe with the majority in North Fawley.

There is a village connection with Thomas Hardy. His grandmother was born in North Fawley in 1772 and Hardy described the village and the church in his book 'Jude the Obscure'. His sister Mary, when she visited the village in 1864, described it as 'a pretty place among the finest hills, most original and hearty set ever could be, I think'. Not too much has changed in Fawley since that date.

There is a mixture of villagers which include skilled manual trades' people and professional people. There are also a number of active retired people who involve themselves within the community. Villagers support and help one another and the general atmosphere in the village is happy and lively. There is a mixture of rented and home ownership properties and the majority of parishioners have lived in the village for many years. The village club is the focal point of the village which depends on volunteers; it offers many varied events all of which are well supported. It also helps with many church events. There is a well-attended book club which meets once a month.

Whatcombe is a racing stable which is owned by Mr Paul Cole and his family and there is a large young transitory community.

Church Life

We hold two services a month, one Family service at 10.30 am with Holy Communion which can have an attendance of up to 20 of predominantly middle age and upwards and a 9am Book of Common Prayer which is always well attended. We have been known to have 14 in the congregation. We also hold services for Harvest Festival, a Carol Service and Remembrance Day.

The Church Building

The present church of St Mary the Virgin was built in 1866. It is a striking building as it is built from small rock faced stones and the south- eastern tower has a pyramid roof. The architect George Edmund Street was influenced by the Gothic architecture he saw on his travels in Europe, as Fawley church shows. He was commissioned by Blanche Wroughton of Woolley Park and the family paid for the building of the church. Parts of the mediaeval old church have been incorporated into the new church. The two-light east windows were designed by Burne-Jones and made by William Morris. The nave is built on three bays with both north and south aisles.



The church is always kept unlocked and both the church and the churchyard are beautifully kept by parish volunteers. The heating system works well and during the last year we were very fortunate that one of our villagers made some new gates for us. It has an efficient PCC which consists of eight very dependable, friendly and able parishioners. Financially we manage to keep our heads above water with some interesting fundraising ideas when we try to include the whole village.

Current Strengths and Future Hopes

Strengths:

- A beautiful church building which is in good condition and well maintained
 - Small rural parish with a vibrant community
 - An active PCC good at fundraising

Hopes

- To reach out to more members of the community
- To ensure the future financial stability of the church

5.7 Chapels held by the Churches Conservation Trust



St Margaret's Church, Catmore, in the parish of Brighwalton with Catmore

This gem of a Norman church built in 1175 is Grade 1 listed. Surrounded by a churchyard and burial ground it nestles in countryside yet benefits from the largest car park in the Benefice. The church has no electricity and is lit by candles.



St Thomas' Church, East Shefford, in the parish of Great Shefford

This simple church of Pre-Norman origin stands in a beautiful spot on the edge of the water meadow beside the River Lambourn.

The Churches Conservation Trust operates the third largest heritage estate in charitable ownership in the UK. All its churches are listed, mostly Grade I and II*, and some are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. With the support of local volunteers they ensure that these churches continue to be enjoyed as cultural, social, tourism and educational resources while also consecrated and available for occasional worship services.

St Margaret's and St Thomas' are held in great affection by local people and are supported by local enthusiasts. Both may be used up to four times a year for services. There has been a regular pattern of Christmas Carols in both churches with a Whitsun Evensong and Harvest Festival at St Margaret's Church. The burial ground at St Margaret' Church remains open for burials and marriages by Special Licence are permitted in both. The pandemic has disrupted the usual pattern of use and fundraising so a Summer Songs of Praise is planned for St Margaret's Church this year.

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6 Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1: Service Information

Example of Current Services Post Lockdown Recovery Period

	Time	Parish	Service	Attendance (where recorded)
1st May	10am	Great Shefford	United Benefice Service with Breakfast	
8th May	9am	Shefford Woodlands	BCP Holy Communion	
	10.30	Fawley	Morning Praise & Holy Communion	
15th May	9am	Leckhampstead	BCP Holy Communion	
	10am	Great Shefford	Café Church	
	10.30am	Chaddleworth	Morning Praise & Holy Communion	
22nd May	9am	Wickham	BCP Holy Communion	
	10.30	Brightwalton	Morning Praise & Holy Communion	
29th May	10am	Brightwalton	United Benefice Service with Breakfast and Village Walk	
2nd June	6.30pm	Chaddleworth	Jubilee Evening Song <i>Using the original service held throughout the country on the Sunday before Her Majesty the Queen's Coronation</i>	65
5th June	10am	Leckhampstead	Jubilee United Benefice Service with Toast	70
12th June	9am	Fawley	BCP Holy Communion	
	10.30	Great Shefford	Morning Praise & Holy Communion	

Additional

Every Wednesday Evening Prayers on Zoom

Every Thursday Mid-Week coffee on Zoom

The 10.30am Sunday service is also live streamed on Zoom

6.2 Appendix 2 - Typical Attendance during Covid times

2021 Attendance	Brightwalton & Catmote	Chaddleworth	Fawley	Gt.Shefford & S.Woodlands	Leckhampstead	Welford & Wickham
Easter		10		5	18	11
Christmas		32	17	60	64	50
Advent – School & Community	50			189		161
Baptisms	2		1	5		5
Weddings	1			3	2	3
Funerals		1		4	1	1