



WEST TONE BENEFICE



CONTENTS

| <u>Page</u> | <u>Title</u> |
|--------------------|---|
| 3 | DIOCESAN STATEMENT – OUR VISION FOR GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION |
| 6 | MISSION STATEMENT FOR WEST TONE BENEFICE |
| 6 | JOB DESCRIPTION |
| 7 | WHAT THIS POST CAN OFFER YOU |
| 7 | WHAT WE CAN OFFER YOU |
| 8 | ZONE DEANERY |
| 8 | WELCOME TO THE BENEFICE OF WEST TONE |
| 9 | WHERE ARE WE? |
| 9 | MAP OF THE DEANERY |
| 10 | MAP OF THE BENEFICE |
| 11 | THE VICARAGE |
| 12 | CHILDREN’S EDUCATION IN THE AREA |
| 14 | THE BENEFICE OF WEST TONE |
| 15 | THE CHURCHES AND VILLAGES OF WEST TONE BENEFICE |
| 27 | CHURCH FINANCES |
| 28 | OUR CHURCH LIVES, EVENTS AND PEOPLE |
| 35 | CURRENT/FUTURE SERVICE PROVISION |
| 36 | OUR THANKS TO YOU |

DIOCESAN STATEMENT – OUR VISION FOR GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

We are delighted that you are considering whether this post of Rector in the West Tone Benefice in Bath and Wells might be right for you. In order to help your prayerful discernment, we want to share a bit about our diocesan vision, within which we hope your own ministry might flourish.

Appointing a priest incumbent is amongst the most significant decisions that any benefice makes. When appointments work out well, they contribute significantly to parishes flourishing and growing in a host of different ways – in spiritual depth, in impact within local communities and in the numbers of people becoming part of the local church. Such flourishing is not, of course, all down to the person appointed as priest. It depends first and foremost upon God. It also depends upon everyone in a benefice being willing and able to contribute their unique gifts, skills, resources and abilities: working alongside their priest and sharing in the ministry of the benefice.

The flourishing and growth of churches always needs attention, but especially now as we come out of the shock created by the COVID pandemic. The impact of the pandemic created a sharp acceleration in the pattern of decline in church attendance that has been seen in our diocese over many years. Thankfully there are some signs that we are recovering from the COVID decline. For example, data showed that average adult weekly church attendance in our diocese rose between 2021 and 2022. Statistics only ever tell a partial story. It is even more encouraging to see churches around our diocese developing approaches that respond to the opportunities and challenges in their local context and enable growth to happen.

A vision for growth and transformation

Our diocesan context, described above, has convinced us that for our next season at least, our aim across all our parishes needs to be growing our churches, within and beyond our church buildings, in both numbers and depth of faith, so that we can better work for the transforming of our communities and the life of God's Kingdom amongst us.

Shared priorities

To help us pursue this aim, and following consultation across the diocese in 2023, we are inviting all parishes to focus on four particular areas of our ministry together. It is important for clergy considering working in our diocese to know what these priorities are, even though what they look like in practice will vary in each place.

To value and cherish the people and resources we already have

We aim to ensure each person is well supported and equipped as a follower of Jesus Christ and for any ministries they may feel called to undertake, within the local church and wider community. We are committed to supporting the well-being of all our leaders and church officers, both lay and ordained. We have a fully funded clergy well-being service, the offer of peer support groups, and an excellent team of Diocesan support staff fully focused on supporting our parishes, chaplaincies and schools.

To develop new Christian worshipping communities

Whether it be new forms of worship in a wide variety of settings and times, church revitalisations or church plants, we long to see the good news of Jesus connect with the people in our communities that our traditional offerings struggle to reach.

To share in ministry and leadership

We are committed to the New Testament vision of the church as a vibrant body of people all using their God-given gifts. We are committed to a model of shared local ministry: raising up and equipping lay and ordained leaders able to share together in leading the church and serving God's world.

To deepen and grow faith

This is foundational to all we do. We long to see people of all ages and backgrounds, but perhaps especially children, young people and young adults, having more opportunities to discover, explore and grow in faith.

The outcome we are looking for

When he talks about his own ministry in 1 Corinthians, Paul captures the dynamic we are seeking to achieve. "I planted," he says, "Apollos watered, but God gave the growth"(1 Cor 3: 6). We know that our churches will only flourish and grow as a result of God's action among us – it is God who gives the growth.

But Paul is also clear that we have a part to play too – in watering and planting, in doing the things that enable the conditions for God's growth to be supported. So, covered by prayer, our confident hope is that if we are intentional in seeking God's guidance in planning and supporting growth, then God will honour that to see his people flourish and thrive - in spiritual depth, in impact within local communities, in the numbers of people becoming part of the local church and in transforming communities locally and beyond.

Local shaping and diocesan support

There can't be any 'one size fits' all approach to turning the priorities outlined above into action. They always need to be adapted to local circumstances, opportunities and needs. The task of our diocesan support services is to get behind all that local benefices are doing

and apart from their general support, there is specific support for exploring how to grow new Christian communities, how to discern and equip a growing range of ministries in your context and how to work well with children and young people. All of these areas of support are grounded in exploring what it means to live out our faith.

What implications does this have for the appointment of clergy?

It is important for us all to appoint clergy to benefices who are ready, willing and able to pray for and share in the vision we have for the flourishing and growth of churches and Christian life in our diocese. We want to create an environment that could be described as high challenge, high support. This means appointing clergy who will not only value all that already exists but will be eager to work with others to build on and develop it. It means appointing clergy who are committed to learning, being creative, and to starting with the gifts God has given to them, their benefice and the wider community. We are therefore looking to appoint candidates who will

- be committed to praying and intentionally seeking the growth and flourishing of the benefices in their care
- relish and expect to work in an environment that is high challenge, high support
- work joyfully and collaboratively with those who share with them locally in ministry and leadership, with their congregations and with others in their locality, to identify ways to grow and develop their churches with the grain of local priorities, resources, skills and passions
- enjoy working in partnership with deanery and diocesan colleagues

We hope this might be you! We hope that you'd like to join us on the adventure and course we've set for our next ten years. We're praying that God will send us the right labourers for the harvest that God has set before us. Could this be you?

+ Michael Barr & Wells.

Steve Hill.

Bishop of Bath and Wells



Archdeacon of Taunton



MISSION STATEMENT FOR WEST TONE

West Tone is a diverse Church family seeking to serve God with our whole lives. Our mission is to bring people of all ages to God through the sharing of His Love and the Peace of Christ. We have a strong desire to achieve our goal by personal example, service and outreach to our local communities.

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR PRIEST FOR THE WEST TONE BENEFICE

In the words of an old TV programme called Mission Impossible, “your task, should you choose to accept it” will evolve over time and under your direction whilst working alongside the various PCCs. This is a new benefice that will see the churches and people being drawn together with common aims and objectives.

We seek to appoint someone with the following attributes:-

- 1) Has a view of mission which engages with the community and seeks to attract people to engage with Christian faith and encounter the love of God
- 2) Is actively involved in the wider aspects of our community and local schools
- 3) Someone who has a pastoral heart for the congregation and wider community and who has a sense of humour
- 4) An ability to understand and minister within a rural as well as a semi-urban context
- 5) Is supportive of a variety of approaches to worship and who is continuing to explore their own spirituality
- 6) An enabler who encourages and nurtures the gifts of others in a prayerfully active way, which can guide us to greater discipleship
- 7) Will work alongside us in developing the service we offer to the community, using creativity and effective leadership

WHAT THIS POST CAN OFFER YOU

This benefice has some unusual aspects that should appeal to a wide range of skill sets. You will have the unique challenge and opportunity to do the following:-

- 1) Work with a wide range of churchmanship from Anglo-Catholic to Evangelical
- 2) Work within a wide range of lifestyles from rural, farming villages to semi-urban areas
- 3) Work amongst recently built housing developments and the un-churched
- 4) Work with the rural poor and youth to inspire and give a message of hope
- 5) Work to improve communications and transport lack for both the young and the elderly
- 6) Develop a Pastoral Care Team to serve the nursing and residential homes in the Benefice
- 7) Work to mentoring the young and developing youth work through the schools
- 8) The opportunity to be a superhuman if you tackle all the above, however you will have your own expertise and priorities and hopefully will select the area that will suit your skills

WHAT WE CAN OFFER YOU

We know that a new job is always a challenge but there are some exciting opportunities in this post to appeal to someone with the gifts to have a real impact on the lives of people in this area. We can offer some very committed people, our prayers, our friendship and support and our willingness to help your ministry to flourish. Our vision for this Benefice is for it to grow in terms of new Christians committed to the church family in this place

There are many residential and nursing homes in this area so pastoral care is a skill that could be exercised. The new residential developments would require skills in the field of outreach. There are many young people who need spiritual direction and an aim in life so mentoring and youth work would be another possibility for your interest.

We hope you feel called to come to us so we can work alongside you.

STONE DEANERY

The Stone Deanery has 35 places of worship and following our deployment process, we are now made up of six benefices, each with a Stipendiary post. In this rural and urban area mix, we are fortunate to have many active and supportive retired priests and experienced Readers, as well as new people offering for Reader and Ordination training.

This is a Deanery committed to Lay training, Lay Worship Assistants, Pastoral Assistants and Chaplains. As a small Chapter we will share our responsibilities for discernment of calling and training. Our Chapter meetings are, at present, "greater" Chapter meetings including our retired clergy and Readers and it is our intention to be a close network for supporting each other and sharing our wisdom and concerns. The Deanery regularly has curates in training and we share opportunities for their developments among the six benefices,

At this time of rapid change, new ideas are welcome. We invite you to share in the vision and work of this deanery and to recognise and welcome the Kingdom of God in this place.

Helene Stainer
Area Dean

Charles Doble
Lay Dean

WELCOME TO THE BENEFICE OF WEST STONE

We are delighted that you are considering coming to our area and we look forward to meeting and working with you. We are hopeful that God will send someone who will lead us in our faith journey, share in our vision for this area and help us achieve our mission to bring God into more people's lives.

West Stone is composed of 8 churches in 7 parishes. The benefice consists of 6 small rural communities, covering a large area of south-west Somerset, whilst Rockwell Green is a growing community on the edge of Wellington.

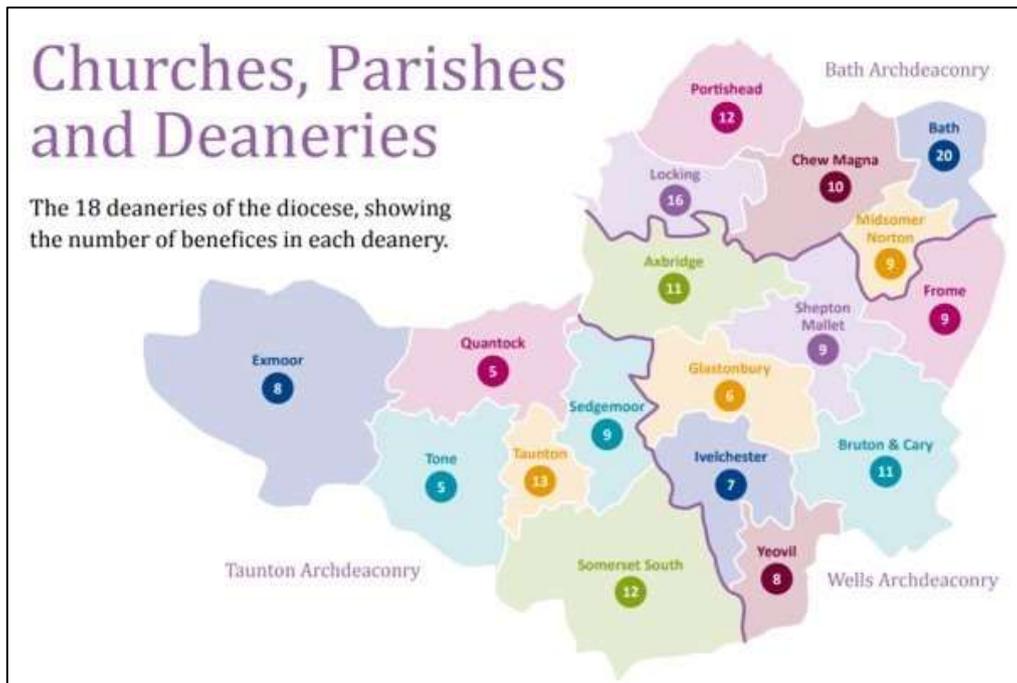
WHERE ARE WE?

Somerset is in the south-west corner of England and enjoys mild winters. It has easy access to the rest of England through the M5 and GWR station at Taunton, with Wellington Rail Station due to open in 2025. Somerset has access to two coastlines less than an hour away.

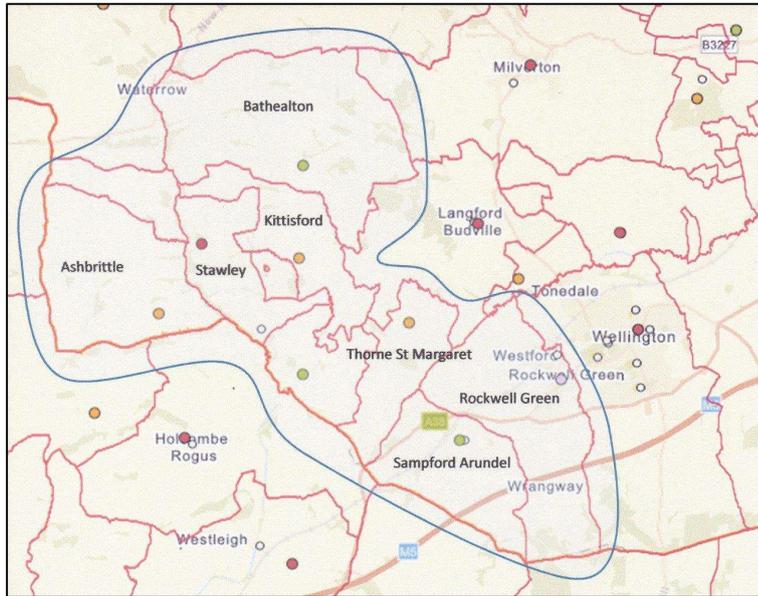


MAP OF THE DEANERIES IN BATH AND WELLS DIOCESE

West Tone Benefice is in Tone Deanery shaded in mid-blue in the west of the county.



MAP OF WEST TONE BENEFICE SHOWING THE POSITION OF EACH CHURCH



The coloured dots are the churches. The red dots are Grade 1 listed, amber are Grade 2*, green are Grade 2 and pink are not listed. The dots with no colours are schools.

THE VICARAGE



The Vicarage is located in the centre of Rockwell Green and is a fairly modern house with an ample garden. Built as a private house, it was bought by the Church Commissioners to replace the original Victorian Rectory, which was considered uneconomic to maintain and too expensive for the incumbent to heat. No plan of the house is currently available.

Rockwell Green has a well-stocked shop, post office, butchers, fish and chip shop, a restaurant, a hairdresser's salon, public allotments, a village hall and a church school catering from pre-school age to the end of junior education. Court Fields is the senior school lying towards Wellington and educates 11 – 16 year olds. Sixth form provision is provided in Taunton at Richard Huish College. Private fee-paying education from pre-school to sixth form is also available at Wellington School.



There is an ample and private garden laid mainly to grass but with a patio, flower beds and fruit trees.

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AVAILABLE IN THIS AREA

NURSERY SCHOOL/PLAY GROUP ACTIVITIES

There is a play group running in Rockwell Green and there are more in Wellington, some of which are attached to primary schools, as well as those run by individual groups. Most of the private schools run nursery schools so they can offer education from early years to six form level.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Three of the parishes have Primary schools associated with them:-

- 1) Rockwell Green Church of England Primary School based in the village
- 2) Sampford Arundel Community Primary School based in the village and
- 3) Stawley Primary School based at Appley Cross and serving several small villages

N.B. Sampford Arundel and Stawley are federated and work under one headmistress.

ROCKWELL GREEN CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

'Staff at Rockwell Green make sure that pupils experience the school's motto: Sharing life in all its fullness.' (Ofsted, 2023)

'The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Rockwell Green primary school as a Church of England school are outstanding.' (SIAMS 2018)

Rockwell Green is a larger than average size village school close to Wellington, with 206 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils live near the school. Most pupils are of white British heritage, but a small percentage have English as an additional language. A higher proportion than average of pupils receive the pupil premium grant and free school meals, but attendance rates are also higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is in line with the national average. In an Ofsted inspection in March 2023 the school was awarded 'good' in all areas.



The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Rockwell Green primary school as a Church of England school are outstanding:

- The headteacher and senior team, together with the governors, provide strong spiritual leadership which is the foundation of the school's Christian distinctiveness.
- The impact of the school's ethos on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is clear in the confident way pupils speak about the school's values and spiritual matters.

SCHOOL CHAPLAIN

The school has had a school chaplain (Helena Power) since 2017, employed by St John's Church PCC on behalf of Wellington and District Team Ministry Learning Community.

Ministry Areas in Rockwell Green School:

- Supporting Christian education and the implementation of SIAMs recommendations
- Working with pupils one-to-one and in small groups
- Leading Godly Play sessions
- Facilitating church visits to All Saints' Church

'It's a privilege to be able to explore the stories of the Bible and our everyday experiences with the children, listening to their ideas and always learning from them.' Helena



From a very short survey, asking what they like about visiting the church or about my work with them, the children all mentioned the activities.

I like going to the church (y1; couldn't say why, just 'because I like it')

I like going to the church when there are stations. It's fun. (Y6; of harvest experience etc.)

I like it when you tell the stories with all the things and you act it with them. (y6, Godly play)

I like all the stories best. (y3)

SAMPFORD ARUNDEL PRIMARY AND STAWLEY PRIMARY (sited at Appley)

These schools are federated i.e. they share a Head teacher who divides her time between the schools. Neither of these are church schools so there is little formal contact between the parish church and the staff/pupils. Under a previous member of staff, who was also a Lay reader, there was a flourishing campfire church run after school.

SENIOR SCHOOLS

Senior school education is based either in Wellington at Court Fields Community School or in Wiveliscombe at Kingsmead Community School. A few children are transported to 'out of area' schools due to their parent's workplace being in Taunton or its surrounding area. There are also private fee-paying schools in Wellington (Wellington School) and Taunton (King's College, Queen's College and Taunton School). All the private schools have sixth forms. Court Fields and Kingsmead schools feed pupils into either Richard Huish Sixth Form College, Taunton or Bridgwater and Taunton College which runs some courses in Bridgwater and others in Taunton.

THE BENEFICE OF WEST TONE

This is a newly created benefice consisting of the following churches:-

*Ashbrittle including Greenham (2 churches in one parish)

*Bathealton

*Kittisford

Rockwell Green

Sampford Arundel

*Stawley and

Thorne St Margaret including Holywell Lake (no church)

*These parishes function as one parish with a joint PCC and rotate a Sunday service.

Some churches have worked together in the past but the current group has never been in existence until now. These are all rural parishes except for Rockwell Green, which is largely an adjunct to Wellington. Rockwell Green could be regarded as a town church, but the area is regarded as a village by the local community. Four estates have recently been built, or are under construction, in Rockwell Green and these have affected the demographic population. Plans are also being drawn up to apply for planning permission for a fifth estate and a large nursing home.

POPULATION OF EACH PARISH

Figures are the latest available for each parish and some are considerably out of date e.g. Rockwell Green, they also vary between civil and parish boundaries.

325 Ashbrittle including Greenham

194 Bathealton

133 Kittisford

2859 Rockwell Green including Holywell Lake

294 Sampford Arundel

279 Stawley including Appley and Tracebridge

N/A Thorne St Margaret (approximately 110 without Holywell Lake)

THE CHURCHES AND VILLAGES OF WEST TONE BENEFICE

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST'S CHURCH ASHBRITTLE



Location: TA21 0LF

The village takes its name from ash trees and Bretel de St Clair, the Norman lord in 1086. It is a hilltop village of scattered 16th and 17th century farms with a community set around a village green, an unusual feature in this area.

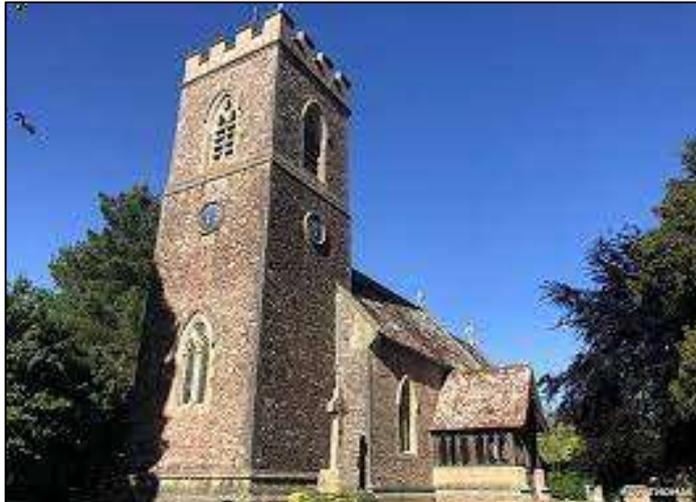
Unusually for such a small remote parish there are two churches in the parish: St John the Baptist, Ashbrittle and St Peter's, Greenham. The former church is behind the village green and is hidden from view. It is built of local stone with Hamstone dressings. Heavily restored in 1874 when a clock was installed.



The Ashbrittle yew (*Taxus baccata*) is reckoned to be between three and four thousand years old. It is officially the "Oldest living thing in England" and is on the list of the 50 great trees of Britain produced by the Tree Council for Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee in 2002. It is on top of a Bronze Age Bowl Barrow and has seven trunks and a diameter of 42 feet.

Currently services are held at 9.30 a.m. on the second Sunday of each month. The electoral roll numbers 7, membership 4, and the PCC numbers 6. However, all possess a positive outlook and work with local groups and individuals. We are supported by local congregations and the average attendance is around 12 to 18 communicants. We have significant financial reserves and costs generally are met by at least one individual who has set up a trust to ensure the financial viability of the church and community for future generations. We have been granted annual financial support from Ashbrittle Parish Council. We are one of the first parishes in the diocese to pay our parish share in full. Any recommendations in our last QQ surveys have largely been attended to. There is an active band of bellringers, a "Guild of Clock Winders" and a peripatetic village choir serving the local parishes.

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH
BATHEALTON



Location: TA4 2AN

Bathealton village is hidden by wooded hills and lies in a valley to the west of Wellington. The village was given to William de Mohun of Dunster Castle following the Norman Conquest. Later it was divided into three and then re-united under the Webber family, passing finally to the Moysey family in 1845. There are some listed buildings within the village.

The church was substantially rebuilt in 1854 under C.E. Giles, although the chancel retains earlier monuments to the Webber family and the west wall has tablets to the Moysey family. There is an early 18th century engraved brass and a 1673 monument to Edward Sharpe. Stained glass is by John Toms.

Currently Holy Communion is held at 9.30 a.m. on the fourth Sunday of each month.

ST PETER'S CHURCH GREENHAM



Location: TA21 0JJ

St Peter's Church, Greenham has an idyllic setting in a peaceful hamlet close to Wellington. The church was built as a chapel of ease in 1865 to save a long, uphill walk to Ashbrittle. Mindful of the fact that the church was outside Faculty Jurisdiction but required Listed Building consent from the LPA, the churchwardens decided that the Bishop should be petitioned for the building to be consecrated. The river runs around the church site. Built in 1860 by Henry Davis to a design by C.E. Giles. The roof looks like an upturned boat. An unusual feature is a modern (2008) Royal Arms commemorating a former churchwarden. There is an elegant "candle snuffer" spire mounted on the octagonal NW tower. A monument to Admiral Kelly has lettering by Eric Gill, who also produced two plaques and a churchyard cross dedicated to Lady Kelly. Nearby is Greenham Barton, a fascinating listed building probably rebuilt in 1403 with many changes since then.



Currently the church holds services according to the book of Common Prayer at 9.30 a.m. on 5th Sundays of the month when they occur.

SAINT NICHOLAS CHURCH KITTISFORD



Location:- TA21 0SA

Church Buildings and History

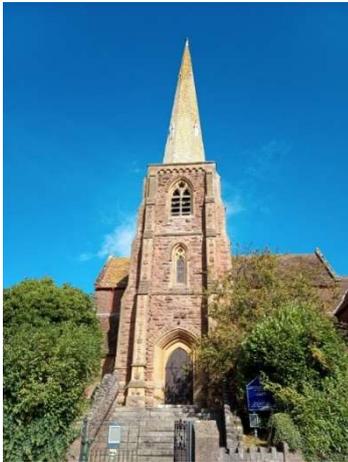
The church has a very long history as a place of worship. It was built around the 1480's following the building of nearby Cothay Manor, altered in the mid 1600's and subsequently restored in 1875. There is a visitor's guide and a children's history trail about the church but its most notable features are its unusual Tudor oak pillars and arches carved to look like stone, an oak pulpit from the 1600s and two monumental brasses let into the wall dedicated to Richard and Agnes Bluett (nee Verney). The church is in a good state of repair but the wall beyond the altar is in need of re-decoration. There are no further facilities such as a church hall, toilets, kitchen etc.



Finance St Nicholas pays its parish share each year in full in January. At the end of 2023 our surplus for the year was £2,257 and our balance was £11,262. Our Parish Share for 2024 was £2,029 and has been paid in full. There are no capital projects in progress or under consideration, the church is in a good state of repair. Fundraising ensures that we have a reasonable surplus each year. If funds are required for building works, as they were for replacement of half the roof six years ago, the local property owners rise to the challenge and this should not affect the normal expenditure of St Nicholas.

Church Services and Support St Nicholas church is the focal point for community activities in our small rural village which doesn't even have a post box. There are just 4 people on the electoral roll and at the moment we enjoy a service on the third Sunday of each month. As we are in a group of rural churches our regular congregation can swell to 12 to 14 as people travel from the other churches to us. The church is supported by a Churchwarden, a PCC and a Treasurer. We have a regular paid organist. We are keen to welcome new members to the PCC and would benefit from a second churchwarden.

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH **ROCKWELL GREEN**



Location TA21 9DH



All Saints' Church, Rockwell Green with its new spire (re-shingled 2022) and its interior.

The church is unusual as the outside is built of stone but inside is ornamental brickwork. Having only been built in 1890 there are photographic and written records from the laying of the foundation stone, attended by more Freemasons than clergy, to the re-shingling of the spire (2021/22). All the windows have stained glass. The congregation is split 40/60 between parish residents and those who travel to the church for its friendly and welcoming Christian congregation or for its Anglo-Catholic style of worship. The spire dominates the area and, along with the two nearby listed water towers, forms part of Wellington's version of the "Three Graces".

OUR WORSHIP

Talented bellringers ring before every service and special events. The tower captain made an alliance with other local ringers to ensure a team is always available. Ringers support other towers and rang in Devon to ensure every bell tower sounded the news of the Coronation. The ringers have trained several young people to be new campanologists.

A brass plaque in the vestry records the covenant made to hold a weekly eucharist. The church has followed Anglo-Catholic tradition from its beginning. Three servers assist the priest by setting up the altar, changing frontals and preparing the priest's robes, as well as being crucifer, distributing the elements, re-filling the incense thurible etc and generally ensuring all runs smoothly. The fully Sung Eucharist is accompanied by the paid organist and a small, voluntary, robed choir. Hymns follow the liturgical calendar, using RSCM guidelines, and the organist ensures there is a varied range from plainsong to modern worship songs.

OUR FINANCES

This is not a rich parish but people give what they can via standing order or an envelope scheme. The treasurer, a regular worshipper and accountant, ensures we pay our Common Fund in full, keep sensible reserves, pay bills on time and can respond to major disasters e.g. Turkish/Syrian earthquake as well as making charitable donations e.g. £500 each to Shelterbox and Grace Church in Nepal (with whom we have a connection).

FABRIC

The fabric is currently in good order and with some work in hand. During covid we raised money for urgent replacement of the spire's shingles as it was losing shingles in high winds. The architect's quote was for an unjustifiable sum of £218,000 but, after much research, we used steeplejacks costing £22,000+. It took a year, but the result has been a new spire with a 40-year guarantee on materials and labour. The Lang Room, behind the church, is valued as a small meeting room within the community and acts as a church hall. It has full disability access, two lavatories – one suitable for wheelchairs - is in excellent repair, has a fully equipped kitchen and makes a small profit from hire fees.

ADMINISTRATION

We have two Churchwardens, a PCC secretary, a treasurer plus four church members on the PCC. There are two members serving on the Deanery Synod. Following a time when there were no churchwardens, a list was produced of all essential tasks and various members took these on. This means that someone draws up rotas for a) the elected Sidesmen, b) readers for the service and c) refreshments. The organist produces hymn lists for three months at a time, prints them out and distributes them to the appropriate places in the church. Following covid, we have not resumed people preparing the intercessions.

When covid struck, a decision was made to produce a weekly newsletter to keep people together and to offer a point of contact for those who lived alone. This has continued and we are now on Newsletter number 201. This is distributed electronically where possible, but we still print and distribute 7 copies. Various people in the congregation supplied the paper, ink, stamps and envelopes to support this venture so no cost fell on the church.

OUR CONGREGATION

Currently there are 40 on the Electoral Roll with an average attendance of 20+, however several are long term sick in care homes. The age range runs from 3 years old to some people in their 80s. As all services end with refreshments at our servery, this ensures socialising for all. We also have a children's area with toys, books drawing table etc.

HOLY CROSS CHURCH
SAMPFORD ARUNDEL



Location:- TA21 9QT

This is a Grade II listed church situated within the village of Sampford Arundel close to both the village school and a useful car park. The church is small, as befits the size of the village and has a small organ in the chancel. It is one of the few churches locally that has a clock on the tower. The village lies at the western end at the base of the scarp slope of the Blackdown Hills (AONB). In 1225 Nicholas Arundel was pursued by his tenants, denied sanctuary at the church and murdered. His body was taken to the manor house and the tenants set fire to the house. The prior of Canonsleigh, Devon carried off the corpse and, after a trial, fourteen of the tenants were hung. Today the village is peaceful!

The village is the last village in Somerset on the A38 and is close to the Whiteball tunnel descent to Wellington, where the City of Truro steam train is credited with being the first train to travel at over 100 mph! The village has a village hall where the Women's Institute meets monthly. The Beam Bridge, re-named in 1832 after a County road bridge, is a nearby public house that serves a wide area as it is on the main road, close to Wellington and offers both food and accommodation.

A communion service is held every 2nd Sunday (9.00a.m.) each month and an Evensong every 4th Sunday (6.00p.m.) and the singing is supported by a small choir. There are 32 on the Electoral Roll. We are unable to pay the Parish Share in full due to depleted numbers.

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, STAWLEY



Location: TA21 0HS

Stawley is an idyllic, rural parish of many farms, most of which date from the 16th and 17th centuries. St Michael's church is a gem and is well worth its Grade 1 listing.



The church is on the site of an earlier Norman building and some herringbone pattern walling still survives in the nave. There is a 13th century font and door complete with its hinges. Much of the current church was built in early 16th century, paid for by local farmer and trader Henry Howe, who is remembered by a scroll over the door. Additional funding, possibly from John Poulett, 1st Baron Poulett, paid for the tower which displays his coat of arms with three swords. There are two unusual windows, one is a 16th century square-headed east window and the second is a rare, 17th century leaded rectangular window in the north wall. The interior is the main delight and has late-Georgian woodworks and fittings, i.e. box pews, pulpit with tester, dado panelling, communion rails etc. The church register dates from 1528. Despite the minor Victorian restoration (1873) the church fabric is largely as in medieval times. In 2007 a sixth bell, which had previously been at the Church of St Peter and St Paul, Maperton, was added. Given the age of the church building, there is an ongoing programme of maintenance. The PCC meets regularly and treats its responsibilities very conscientiously. It would provide a very warm welcome and active support for the new vicar. Currently there is one service at 9.30 a.m. on the first Sunday of the month.

ST. MARGARET OF ANTIOCH
THORNE ST. MARGARET



Location TA21 0EQ

St. Margaret's church stands in the hamlet of Thorne St. Margaret on the high ground above Holywell Lake village. The church is the mid-point on the 'Michael & Mary' Pilgrims' Way. The font marks the precise point. St. Margaret's is open and attracts visitors from many places including abroad; a group came to us from Singapore on Christmas Day! The Visitor's Book is a record, not just of visitors, but how valuable this place of 'peace and tranquillity' is to a broader 'congregation.'

HISTORICAL NOTES

St. Margaret's church was initially built in the 13th Century; it is thought that the font is the remaining item dating back to that time having been buried in the churchyard to escape the ravages of the reformation, and re-discovered at the time of re-consecration in 1865. The present tower and bell date from the 15th century.

It is recorded that when visiting the area an Abbot of Glastonbury would say mass at St Margaret's Church and, as a token of how much he enjoyed these visits to St Margaret's, he gave a painting of 'The Flight into Egypt' to the church.





A major restoration of St Margaret's Church took place in the 1860's incorporating the 15th century tower. This was completed in July 1865 when the church was re-consecrated, the cost being borne by the proceeds from the sale of the painting donated by the Abbot of Glastonbury.

Membership

The Church membership is around 20, and regular attendance at our monthly Parish Communion is about 10 with monthly Evensong services being about the same.

OUR BENEFICE'S FINANCES AT A GLANCE

| FINANCIAL STATISTICS AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023 | | | | | | | |
|---|------------|-----------|------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| | ASHBRITTLE | BATHALTON | KITTISFORD | ROCKWELL GREEN | SAMPFORD ARUNDEL | STAWLEY | THORNE ST MARGARET |
| Parish Share Paid | Full | Full | Full | Full | Part 25% | Full | Full |
| Unrestricted Reserves | £3,500 | £10,636 | £9,495 | £21,833 | £0 | £65,202 | £118,000 |
| Restricted Reserves | £32,345 | £0 | £1,768 | £11,796 | £30,000 | £6,859 | £164,000 |
| Registered Charity | No | No | No | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| Gift Aid/Planned Giving | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| Outstanding or Planned Building Works | None | None | None | None | None | Yes £65,000 | None |
| All Parishes have dedicated treasurers | | | | | | | |

All the churches currently have a treasurer and, in one case, he looks after three churches. Rockwell Green's treasurer is a qualified accountant.

OUR CHURCH LIVES, EVENTS AND PEOPLE

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST'S CHURCH, ASHBRIITLE

Regular village attendance is small but there are no “recusants” and everyone is well disposed towards the church and church life. Special services, for example pet, harvest, remembrance, Christmas and the like are always well supported. There is an active band of bell-ringers centred on the parish and, in addition, a village choir for ours and the surrounding parishes.

One Churchwarden is Acting Patron of the parish and the Lay Dean of Tone Deanery with extensive knowledge of church buildings and procedures, having been a member and Vice Chairman of the DAC for many years until his recent retirement from that post. He is also Vice Chairman of the Diocesan Board of Patronage.

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH, BATHEALTON

As this is an extremely scattered village of isolated farms and a small cluster of houses, the main church and social events revolve around fund-raising. The biggest fund-raising event is a plant sale in May which is combined with a tea. In October there is a Sale of Junk which is mysteriously called “Mrs Bart’s Sale”, no-one is sure why it is called that! The annual Carol Service has been restarted following covid and makes use of the local, travelling choir and is again combined with a tea. There is a community hall in the village.

ST PETER'S CHURCH, GREENHAM

As this is a Chapel of Ease, people tend to go to church at other churches within the group. Invitations are shared across the hamlet’s borders so that social activities are combined and open to all.

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, KITTISFORD



Our Church and Wider Community At St Nicholas we enjoy welcoming people of all ages to the church and making services accessible and fun. We advertise our special services in the monthly Parish News and Rockwell Green weekly newsletter. We frequently fill the church to capacity, especially when the Village Festival Choir joins us. Each year we celebrate Harvest Festival followed with an evening service followed by cheese and cider in the church. At Easter we had an Easter egg hunt in the churchyard for adults and children. At Christmas we held a service of six lessons and carols run by local children and the church was packed with standing room only. Last year we held an outdoor evening service in the grounds of nearby Kittisford House followed by refreshments.

In 2024 we are holding a Compline, Candles and Cake service and a Hedgerow Service as well as other services outdoors to celebrate links to our environment. We might possibly be the smallest parish in the country but probably the most active on a per head basis. The



community values the church and supports it in different ways. Local neighbours care for the churchyard and have been instrumental in establishing re-wilding of parts of the grounds.

There is a local rota for cleaning the church and flower arranging and when simple maintenance is required, such as decorating the porch for a wedding, local people all lend a hand. There is a bell tower with four bells that are rung on special occasions like festivals, baptisms and weddings.

The community is active in fundraising for the church and this year three gardens were opened for an Open Gardens event with cream teas and a jazz band. In recent years, Kittisford House has hosted a fundraising Christmas dinner for the community in a beautiful large barn. This is always a very special event for the community and is usually over-subscribed.

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, ROCKWELL GREEN

People are drawn to All Saints' Church for its traditional Anglo-Catholic style of worship and friendly congregation. Over 60% of them come from outside the parish, some even passing other churches to get here. Emphasis is on a weekly, Sunday morning Sung Eucharist with traditional and modern hymns used. A warm welcome from the Sidesmen, a sit anywhere seating policy and refreshments after every service has gained us a reputation for being very friendly. As we are on the Exeter Road, we have outside displays outside for special services e.g. Remembrance day or harvest.





We are a very “bubbly” congregation, any excuse and we serve Prosecco to mark special occasions (e.g. a golden wedding) or just to celebrate (e.g. Easter or the finishing of the spire). The fund-raising committee regularly come up with a variety of ideas for monthly events that try to appeal to different sections of the wider community whilst being conscious of the rising cost of living. Events that have proved popular have been the Quiz night with Fish and Chip supper and the Strawberry and Prosecco events. The former supported the local fish and chip shop as well as making it easy for the catering team! There is an annual fête (free for children) where we cater appropriately throughout the day. Several of us hold food hygiene certificates and other churches joined us when they needed renewal recently.

Due to falling shingles, money had to be raised during covid restrictions to “Save our Spire” (SOS) or the church would be considered dangerous and have to close. We raised over £22,000 in many creative ways through our SOS events as follows:-

- Sign Our Shingles** – very popular with village residents, £1 per shingle, £5 for 6 shingles
- See Our Scrawls** (art exhibition) – local artists work on sale and we were given 10% of sales
- Savour Our Strawberries** (a strawberry tea and a strawberry and prosecco evening) – this was during the period when only 30 people could attend, but it is now an annual event.
- Sell Our Surplus** – a car boot sale on the hottest day of the year!
- Shlurp Our Sh’liquour** - a cheese and wine information and tasting evening
- See Our Shroud** – a weekend of the touring exhibition of the Turin Shroud replica.
- Sponsorship/Outreach/Summer fête** – sponsorship was sought from local businesses, a new housing developer and various grant giving bodies. Our outreach group “Knit, sew and Natter” baked cakes and a local craft group donated some of the money they raised on a craft stall. Our fête was enhanced by an antique dealer valuing items for people for a small donation to the church.





Behind the church is the Lang Room which can be let out to small groups and brings in an income. This small hall is useful for community use as it has good facilities i.e. ramped entrance, full disabled facilities and a well-equipped kitchen. It is also used for children's birthday parties and funeral catering. The Coronation was celebrated with a free tea for all and included instructions on how to make your own crown!

There are three outreach groups meeting each month in our small parish hall. These are free to attend but many people make donations. The groups are as follows:-

- 1) **Soup 'n' a bite**, now over 20+ years old, providing a soup, bread and cheese lunch with fresh fruit, teas etc and a free raffle. A full Christmas lunch served in December.
- 2) **Knit, Sew and Natter** provides a social event for people to enjoy company, lots of laughter and refreshments.
- 3) **Recycled Teenagers** offers a superb tea with "doggy bags" to a small group of elderly people to reminisce or have occasional speakers etc.



During winter 2022/23 we hosted a weekly "**Warm space**" offering games, jigsaws, chance to chat, soup and a roll plus tea and coffee.

Outreach Support For Other Charities

One of our church members has links with someone who became a Christian, trained in England to be a priest and is the senior pastor of **Grace Church, Nepal**. They visited England in 2023 and we entertained them for lunch followed by a slide presentation on the work their church does in a very poor area. They have an orphanage; run a school (even supplying pupils with school uniforms); run a goat farm to supply milk and a vegetable farm to feed the children, give employment and supply the local poor with food. The PCC voted to give them a grant to enable their work to continue. We were able to buy a survival kit through **Shelterbox** following the Turkish earthquake and hope to have a talk on their work this year. The Lang room is also given rent free to a **Cancer Support Group** run by a nurse. Patients can now drop in to ask questions, share their worries etc in Wellington rather have to travel to Taunton.

HOLY CROSS CHURCH, SAMPFORD ARUNDEL

The church always takes part in the village-organised fête which was interesting this year as the fete date had to be changed at the last moment due to bad weather. After a well-attended (30 – 40 people) Evensong for Harvest Festival, the church used the Parish Room for a sit- down Harvest Supper. There is a good-sized congregation for the Carol Service each year when mulled wine and mince pies are served. The church holds 4 coffee mornings during the year so people can come together and chat. During covid, the Beam Bridge Inn ran a pop-up shop which was much appreciated and this developed into take away meals that could be ordered by phone and collected from the kitchen.

We have been trying out some new activities to expand the interest of the local community in our church:

January - a Concert with tenor Gregory Steward

February - a 'Toy Exchange' when parents and children from the local primary school brought their surplus toys along to the church after school. Refreshments were served and, for a small donation, children could choose a 'new' toy.

The Primary School produced model angels for the Carol Service at Christmas and are keen to be involved where they can.

Building on our contact with parents, they are coming to the Harvest Festival

An afternoon cream tea with Christian poetry readings was held in June for the Flower and Cleaning Team as a 'thank you'.

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, STAWLEY

There are seasonal services held in addition to the monthly services e.g. Harvest Festival (followed by a supper) and the biennial Remembrance Service both of which attract large congregations, as do some special thematic services (e.g., Platinum Jubilee and Coronation Sunday). Services benefit from a local organist, playing an electronic organ installed in 2008 in memory of the former church organist, Julia Luard (1951-2007).

The Church is perhaps best known locally for its six bells. The three larger bells are of the pre-reformation period (1453-1600), the smaller bells date from the 1870s, whilst the newest bell was acquired in 2007 to complete the 1976 bell refurbishment programme. This bell acquisition, retuning work, removal and re-hanging, plus new ropes and muffles, cost over £7,000, which was raised by the current bell ringers from grants and local fund raising, which is a great attribute of Stawley Parish. The new ring of six was dedicated and blessed by the then Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Right Reverend Peter Price, at the Harvest Festival Service in 2007. The Church has a small, but active, group of bell-ringers and is regularly visited by other bell-ringing groups from the South West and beyond.



The Village Festival Choir uses the church as its venue for regular practice due to the high-quality organ and excellent acoustics. The choir performs for special services in Stawley Church and other churches in the group.

The Church hosts a number of fund-raising events throughout the year, which are

always well supported. Highlights include the summer fête and garden party at Stawley Mill, and coffee mornings in the spring (The Old Rectory) and autumn (Church Cottage). A Book Bazaar is also held twice a month with proceeds going to the church. We also host one-off events such as flower festivals and dinner parties. As a result of these, as well as specific charitable contributions, church finances are currently healthy.



Our church is often referred to as an oasis of serenity, peace and tranquillity. We welcome all visitors to our church and this is reflected in their encouraging comments in the Visitors' book. The comments often refer to how well-polished and clean the church is and show an appreciation of our bespoke altar frontal. We are happily low-church and regularly enjoy a congregation of over 18 people for Holy Communion. This is facilitated by our large car parking area by the church and the high-quality bell-ringing summoning people to worship. We are proud of the active role our church plays in the local community. Our events are always well-supported and we all work together to promote a welcoming, inclusive and friendly atmosphere at fund-raising events and at the regular services.

ST MARGARET'S CHURCH, THORNE ST MARGARET



'Harvest Festival'



' Make a Joyful Noise'

Lay-led services are relatively frequent and during the pandemic, online services were held. Thorne St. Margaret's community has held events away from the church in recent years. This was to take account of pandemic restrictions and to allow greater numbers to attend. For the past two years a celebration of Harvest has been held in a local farm; similarly, the Carol Service has been held in a barn in Thorne St. Margaret. Both events typically attract around 50-60 people and raise money for local charities.

We also focus on the unusual and hold occasional events such as 'Make a Joyful Noise' which attracted a large crowd. In July we held a service with, and for, St. Margaret's Hospice; another demonstration of how much we value the role of the Church in charitable giving. This year we have raised funds for St. Margaret's Hospice Care, the Farming Community Network, Shelterbox and 'Open Door. The church itself is relatively well-funded through investment and legacy.

Soup lunches have also been held in the church with people attending from other local churches. It was fun to have tables of people trying out a variety of soups, rolls and cheese scones and drinking tea and coffee in the "gaps" in the church.

CURRENT/FUTURE SERVICE PROVISION

| | First Sunday | Second Sunday | Third Sunday | Fourth Sunday |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Ashbrittle | | 9.30 | | |
| Bathealton | | | | 9.30 H.C |
| Kittisford | | | 9.30 | |
| Rockwell Green | 11.15 SE | 11.15 SE | 11.15 SE | 11.15 SE |
| Sampford Arundel | | 9.00 HC | | 6.00 Evensong |
| Stawley | 9.30 HC | | | |
| Thorne St Margaret | | | 9.30 HC | |

NOTES

- 1) HC = Holy Communion, SE = Sung Eucharist, LL = Lay led
- 2) The parishes of Ashbrittle, Bathealton, Greenham, Kittisford and Stawley work as one group having one service in each church each month.
- 3) Greenham – Services on 5th Sundays only

THANK YOU

We do thank you for considering this Parish Profile and hope, that after due prayer and consideration, you will feel called to apply for the post. We have tried to show the good and bad points of our life here. We feel that with your spiritual guidance and, with us being able to work alongside you, we could achieve something good together in this beautiful area.