

The Coxford Group

of Parishes in the Diocese of Norwich



Benefice Profile 2024

The Benefice seeks a Priest-in-charge who will:

- Lead us into a deeper understanding of Christ's teaching.
- Help us bear witness in our communities to what being a Christian means in modern society.
- Recognise and enjoy the great importance of the pastoral side of their ministry.
- Take an active role in our local Church of England school.
- Recognise the importance of the traditional services and Festivals of the church year, whilst also recognising the variety of liturgy we all enjoy.
- Want to rise to the challenge of rejuvenating the parish of East and West Rudham, and to find new ways of spreading God's word in the newly emerging communities at the Kiptons and the Orchards.
- ABOVE ALL we seek a priest who enjoys their calling and will share that enthusiasm with us, so that together we can all grow closer to our God.

Our Commitment:

- We will work with our new Priest-in-Charge to ensure that the community feels welcome in our churches to learn more about the Gospel of Christ. We will continue to support our lovely church buildings as a visible reminder of that continuing purpose through the lives of us all.
- We are committed to ensuring the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults, and follow the House of Bishops Safeguarding Policy. We have safeguarding officers in place.
- We will continue to fund the Priest-in-Charge's office and will continue to explore enlarging the role of the laity in the running of our parishes and our liturgy.
- We are open to exploring ways to reduce the bureaucracy of running a large number of parishes within the benefice whilst maintaining our individual identities.
- We are committed to clergy well-being and respect our priest's need for a private and family life and that this can take many forms. We acknowledge that we as parishioners have a duty of care to protect their proper days of rest and prayer every week and ensure that holidays, even those taken at home, can be enjoyed without interruptions.

The Future:

The post of Priest-in-Charge of the Coxford Benefice is initially a three-year appointment, and we hope we can work together to justify its renewal for a further three years before either becoming permanent or ending. We thank you for considering applying for the post and ask that you join us in praying that the Holy Spirit will encourage the right person to apply. We can promise that new leader a very warm welcome.



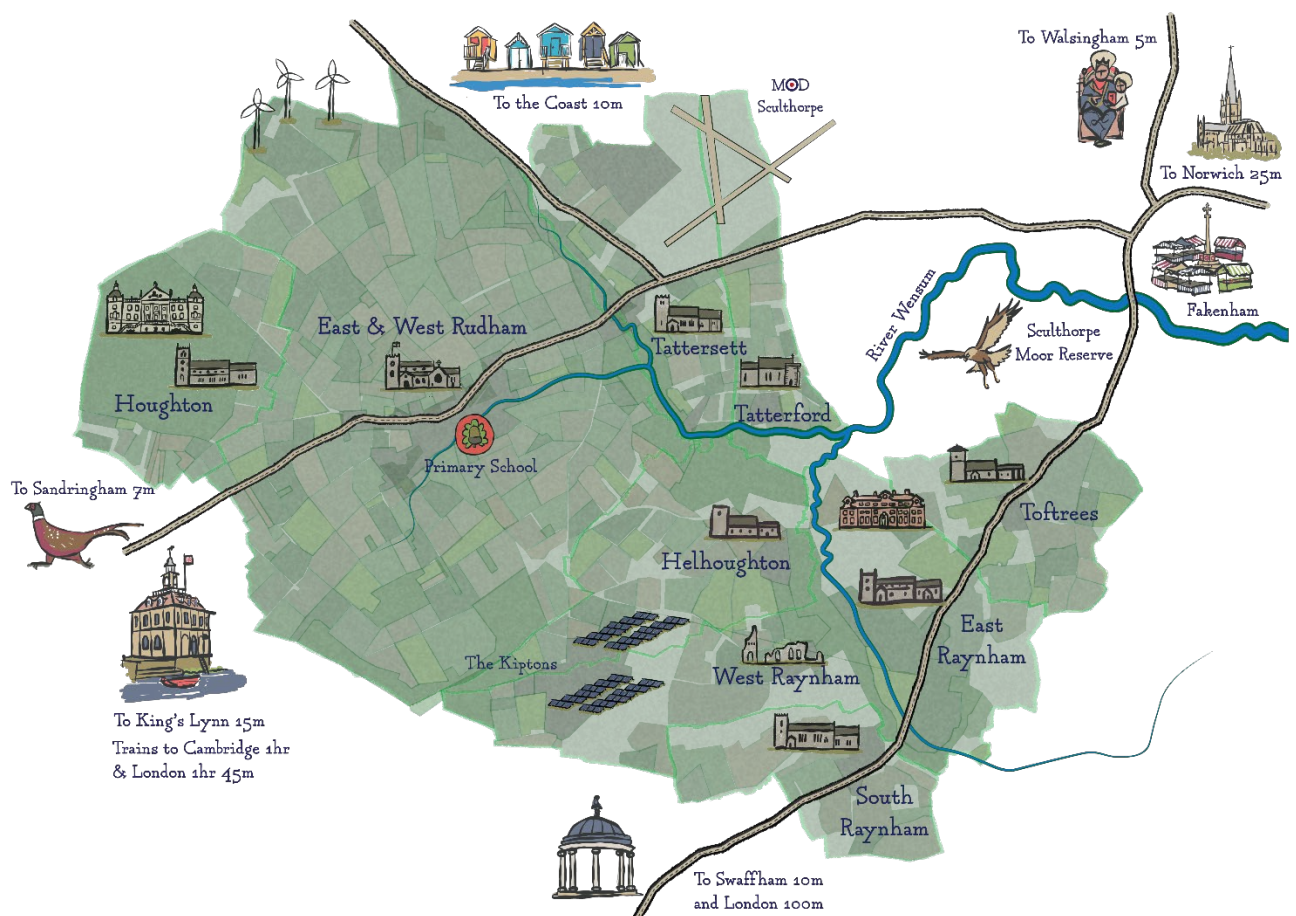
Introduction

The Benefice of Coxford and Toftrees covers a large rural area encompassing 8 active parishes. The total number of people on the electoral role across the benefice is 65, with the total population being just over 3300.

One of the advantages of the area served by the benefice is that unlike areas nearer the North Norfolk coast we have a lower percentage of second homes, and so an opportunity for lasting and meaningful pastoral care and outreach. We are part of the Burnham and Walsingham Deanery within the Diocese of Norwich.

With such a rural conservative (with a small c) background we feel that we need a priest who can unite us in worship and help us to show our local communities the relevance of the Church of England today. Norfolk has always provided a warm welcome to those that come to serve the community in any way.

Of course, there are challenges resulting from the wide area covered by the benefice, and we do not have a central town or major employer as a focus of that agricultural area. Prior to the vacancy arising, pastoral and outreach activities became limited, but we would welcome the leadership to become more outward looking again.



Life of the Benefice

Services

During the vacancy we have usually only had one service a week in the benefice, e.g. Eucharist at Tatterford on the first Sunday, at Tattersett on the second Sunday, Evensong at East Raynham on the second Sunday, Eucharist at Helhoughton on the third Sunday, and eucharist at Houghton and South Raynham on the fourth Sunday. It is a pleasure to record that after an uncertain period that ended with the abrupt resignation of the churchwarden and of the secretary of PCC at East Rudham we are now starting services there again. Toftrees usually only has 6 services a year, based on the main festivals. We are open to change in the pattern of services, believing that every service should be a service for the whole of the benefice as well as the individual parish. This enables us to recognise the wide range of liturgies traditional to the parishes.



Schools

There is a Church of England Primary School in East Rudham which is part of the Hope Federation of Church of England Primary Academies within the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust. The school is rated “Good” by OFSTED, with effective safeguarding. There are currently 74 children on roll. At 11+ children generally transfer to Fakenham Academy or to Litcham High School, with the local authority providing transport. We would want our new priest to be enthused at working with the school to help bring the pupils to an experience of church life within the village.



Community

In most cases the church is the only real community building left in the village, and as such is the ‘lighthouse’ for the parish’s Christian witness to that community. We are keen to make more use of the buildings, and recently, for example, a very well attended concert at St. Marys East Rudham raised funds for the church as well as welcoming well over 100 people. We recognise the need to develop networks of relationships in the local community and seek a priest who can help us to explore imaginative approaches to developing them. This year there will be an Open Gardens event in Tatterford to raise money for the neighbouring parish of Tattersett – a good example of how we work together.



Open Doors

The majority of our churches are open daily. Most of our churches are historically significant buildings from the age when church glebe and tithes supported their upkeep. Of course that is no longer the case, and essential building works and the modernisation necessary for outreach activities have affected the finances of the parishes.



Witness

The desire to maintain the witness of the Christian gospel in our parishes has led to a really warm benefice 'community' developing during the vacancy as we have become more outward rather than inward looking. We hope that the Bishop will be able to appoint a priest who would enjoy building links with the wider community. When it has not been possible for our tremendous Rural Dean to find a priest for a service at a major festival such as Christmas Day, for example, a number of parishes have held laity-led services of Matins rather than people, who are not regular church-goers, feeling that their local church is not active. Of course, it would be easy for strongly committed Christians to just go to another church in the benefice, but we feel that this is putting our own desires above the needs of others. Locally based worship is very much what we are about in the

Coxford Benefice. We may be a number of separate parishes, but we operate in a collaborative way to support each other and the work of the church.





Sacraments

The Rural Dean, the Rev. Clive Wylie, has already helped to ensure that the traditional sacraments of Christening, Marriages and Funerals can take place in any one of our churches, as we encourage the local community to identify as part of the Coxford Benefice as well as part of their own village and parish. We would want our new priest to be an active supporter of regaining the Church's traditional role in these universal stepping stones in everyone's life. We support the use of our churches to mark the stepping stones of life – baptism, marriage and death, even for those with no current links to the particular church. We recognise that these services can revive and support the faith of the whole invited congregation. We also support the use of our churches for the marriage of divorcees and would wish to explore pastoral prayers for same-sex couples with our new Priest-in-Charge if willing to do so.



Ring the Seasons

Between them, the parish and wider group being in a rural location offer rural observances, traditional services with appropriate vestments, between them covering all the principal events and festivals of the

church year – for example Rogationtide, Easter Vigil, Corpus Christi, All Saints and All Souls. The bells in several churches have been restored to ring out in commemoration of festivals and events. Thus individual parish and group practice combines to provide stability and continuity of tried and tested patterns observed over centuries, true to traditional values, but relevant to today's culture.

A



New Chapter

With the retirement of the previous incumbent our focus is on finding a successor who will best serve the core pastoral and spiritual needs of parish and group, taking into account social and economic pressures arising from today's fragmented society which often leads many to question the relevance of the church in the community. Our priorities need to be clearly defined. These may include the maintenance of distinct identity by seeking an incumbent willing to offer the community regular services, plus Baptisms, Marriages and Funerals, respecting the customary practices of various churches in the group, coupled with a pastoral mission of being a visible presence, a good listener and readily accessible to those in need of spiritual advice or comfort. Each parish also needs to consider its position within the Coxford Group, defining what it can realistically offer to promote collective interests. A prospective incumbent is offered the opportunity to deploy much needed pastoral and spiritual skills in the context of traditional Christian values and practice, adapting positively to modern cultural changes and showing tolerance to all.

The Rectory NR21 7HH



Secluded amongst trees and nestled at the edge of the village of West Raynham the 1970s detached rectory has a private plot with a good-sized front and rear garden and lies to the south-east of the benefice. The property is only 10 minutes away from Fakenham and 54 minutes from Norwich Cathedral by car. A school bus service operates throughout the week to Fakenham; On a Tuesday a public bus service is available from the centre of the village to Fakenham for onward connections across the county.

Accommodation

The principal accommodation comprises on the Ground Floor: Hall, cloakroom, lounge, dining room, kitchen/utility room, office space, garage, private rear garden. First Floor: four double bedrooms, one single bedroom, cloakroom and a family bathroom with shower. There is oil-fired central heating. The diocese pays the rates and water bill. They also survey and do any necessary work on the large trees.

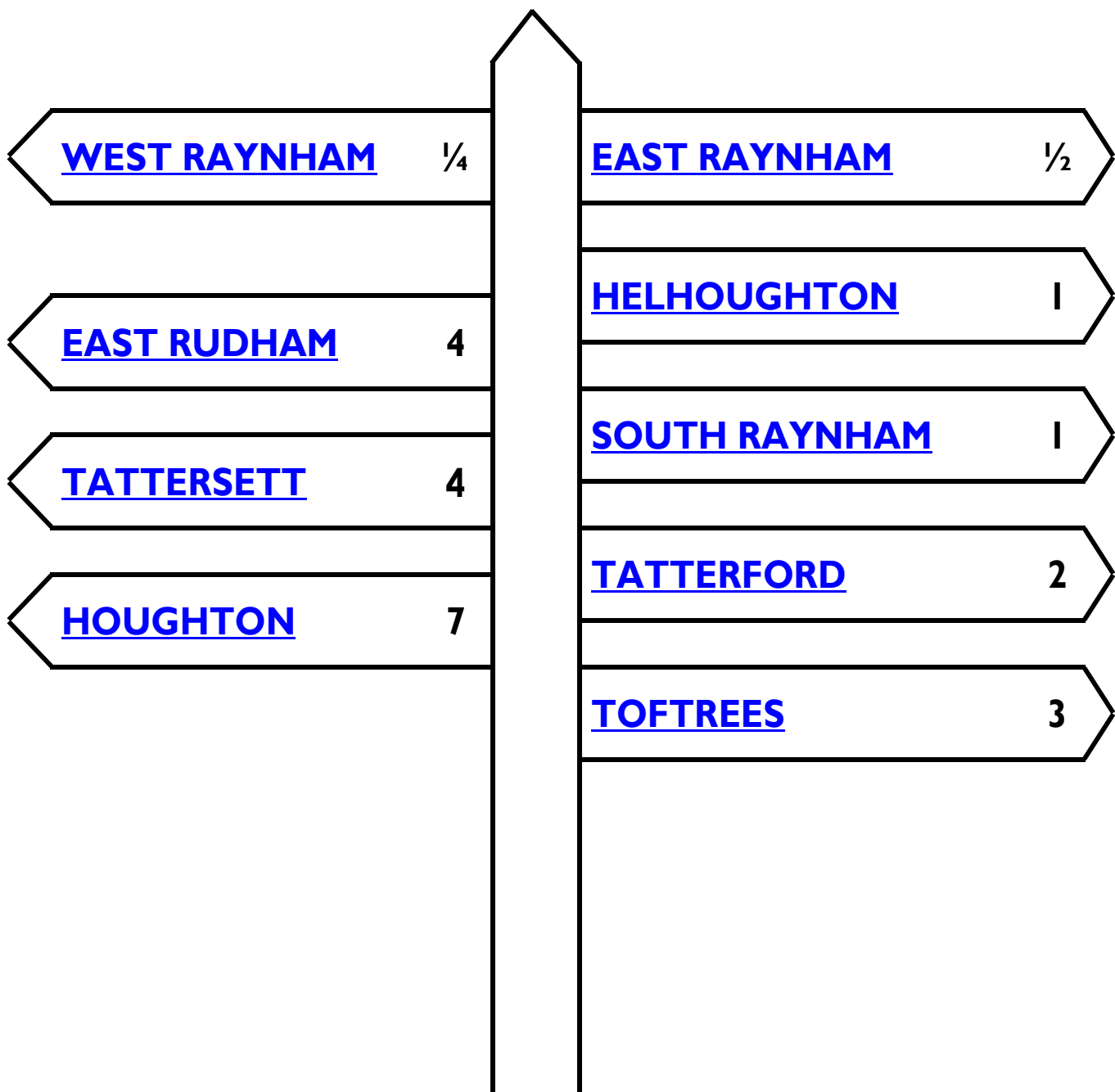
Surrounding Area

A 10 minute journey, 5 miles away, Fakenham is a traditional Norfolk market town situated on the River Wensum, located 25 miles North West from the City of Norwich and 10 miles from the sought after North Norfolk coast. Fakenham offers a range of amenities with a market every Thursday, and regular bus links into Norwich and King's Lynn. There are 4 supermarkets, medical and dentist practices and schools for all ages. Fakenham is home to one of Norfolk's racecourses, which also hosts a sports centre, golf course, social club and other events. Government funding has recently been announced to build a new swimming pool in the town. There is a full range of schools from infant to sixth-form.



The eight parishes within the Group

The churches are mainly 13th century and later. One of the strengths of the benefice is the wide range of liturgy it encompasses, having both regular BCP services and Common Worship Eucharists, often making use of the full range of seasonal materials available.



Distances given are as measured from the Rectory.

All Saints Tattersett PE31 8RS



The two hamlets of Tattersett and Coxford, having initially formed around estate farms, have a predominance of permanent residents as owner-occupiers and tenants, with a minority of second homes. The church of All Saints is a Grade I listed Norman church that has recently been declared “At Risk” by Historic England. It stands in a very isolated rural setting around a half of a mile from the village of Tattersett, and within a few hundred yards of the remains of Coxford Priory. It lies well off the beaten track in the middle of arable and permanent grass fields. The church serves both communities, that of Tattersett on the north side of the A148 and the small hamlet of Coxford which lies with the church on the south side of the main road.

The south door has been dated to around 1200, and alterations are recorded in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. The last large renovation was undertaken in 1907. There is a medieval font, window and piscina. A medieval wall painting is visible but has faded rapidly during the past few years.



The parish ensures that at least one service a month is held at the church and congregation numbers vary from

eight during winter months to an exceptional eighty at the Christmas Day service. The church is kept clean and the grass in the churchyard mown. The Parish Share is paid in full by a very small number of individuals and all routine up-keep of the church is undertaken by Pynkney Estate which owns the surrounding land.

As can be seen from the internal photographs this church is in need of urgent repair. At present it is a stable structure but it will not take many more winters in its exposed site to speed its deterioration. We have, as a Benefice therefore put together a small committee to aim to raise some £250,000 in order to ensure its survival as a used building for worship into the future. An application for funds to propose protection measures for the wall painting has been successful and will therefore be a start point for the greater scheme. Our first target is to address all the points raised in the “At Risk” notice and we will move on to the full restoration once these repairs are under way. A website at www.tattersettchurch.co.uk has now been launched to raise awareness of our campaign.

Parish Facts	
Parish	Tattersett
Church	All Saints
Area	2.5 miles ²
Demographics	
Population	78
Children and Young Adults	14
Working Age Adults	46
Retirement Age Adults	18
% Identifying as Christian	74
% Ethnic Minorities	0
Finances	
Parish Share 2023 (allocated)	£4,260
Parish Share 2022 (actual)	£3,000

All Saints Toftrees NR21 7EB



Although it is situated in a very small hamlet, All Saints Toftrees is the home of one of the finest Norman fonts in Europe. Perhaps ironically the desire to maintain such an historically important building is one of the things that acts as the glue to keeping the small congregation together. We are currently exploring the possibility of obtaining grant aid to stabilise the structure of the church, which has recently been a major beneficiary of the Bats in Churches project-resulting in a license to exclude bats from the nave and chancel of the church.

Although for the past quarter of a century our parish has been treated as part of the Coxford Benefice, strictly speaking we are still linked to another parish.

The Diocese has indicated that it will now move to legitimise us being a full member of the Coxford Group, which we welcome.

We are grateful for a small team of volunteers who care enough about the church to keep the churchyard in shape. We have an ongoing project to discover the stories of everyone who has been buried there over the centuries, and to encourage their descendants to feel part of our current Christian community. Their response has been very encouraging.



Parish Facts	
Parish	Toftrees
Church	All Saints
Area	1.9 miles ²
Demographics	
Population	41
Children and Young Adults	8
Working Age Adults	23
Retirement Age Adults	9
% Identifying as Christian	65
% Ethnic Minorities	3
Finances	
Parish Share 2023 (allocated)	£596.00
Parish Share 2022 (actual)	£472.00

All Saints Helhoughton NR21 7BP



All Saints Helhoughton stands in its churchyard, prominently at the entry to the village. Like others in the benefice, the church is of medieval foundation. The current building dates from the 14th century but might have replaced an earlier structure – our font dates from the late 12th century. The nave was remodelled and reduced in height in the late 18th century, which explains the stripped down, open character of the interior. The result is a place of extraordinary light and openness. A fine place for exhibitions by artists in the village, its superb acoustics have been enjoyed by local musicians, who range from singers of renaissance polyphony to enthusiasts of 1940s big-band music. The churchyard is in transition: the row of horse chestnuts which marked the entrance to the village had to be felled but we intend to replace them soon. Residents would like to see part of the churchyard given over to nature and new plantings of native trees established. New drifts of spring bulbs are being planted. The church currently has one Eucharist service a month, which we usually share with people drawn from neighbouring villages. Numbers typically vary between ten and fifteen. We specialise in celebrating the seasonal feasts of the church year, and make a point of including helpers and participants from the wider village community. Our carol service and Midnight Mass at Christmas are real celebrations enjoyed by a large proportion of the village population – 60 for the carols and 35 for the Midnight Mass in 2023. Our dawn vigil service at Easter has been a much-loved feature of the year, beginning outdoors with a bonfire in the churchyard and ending indoors as the Easter sun rises beyond the east window of the chancel.



We have our difficulties. The tower, roof and gutterings all need restoration and upgrading. We need someone with time and expertise who can help us prepare grant applications and for this we can draw on the wider benefice where there are established and willing skills. Our churchwardens work away from the village, which makes coordinating our activities harder. But the spirit of goodwill is strong, and we successfully tap into networks of talented people in the village who are on the peripheries of our congregation. We aim to make the church a centre for village events to be enjoyed by all, whatever their beliefs.

Parish Facts	
Parish	Helhoughton
Church	All Saints
Area	2.6 miles ²
Demographics	
Population	451
Children and Young Adults	107
Working Age Adults	303
Retirement Age Adults	41
% Identifying as Christian	64
% Ethnic Minorities	1
Finances	
Parish Share 2023 (allocated)	£4,260.00
Parish Share 2022 (actual)	£500.00

St Margarets Tatterford NR21 7AZ



Tatterford is different! We do not have an ancient church but a fantastic Victorian one replacing the original Norman building. St Margarets Church, built in 1862, looks gothic. It sits atop a slope in the centre of the village and is loved by all, despite being referred to by the diocese in years gone by as a “Victorian monstrosity.” It has fabulous Carrara marble pillars and a stained-glass window by Moira Forsyth. The church has been extensively repaired over the last decade and is in fine condition, watched over by a fabric officer, who is also a Historic Building Conservator.

Tatterford is a small, rural community of 40 houses. There is a village website, the village runs two monthly book clubs and a collection point for the local food bank and a village [website](#). There are no amenities in the village but there is a strong, thriving community spirit and good support for the local church. There are only three ‘holiday homes’ in the village, the majority being privately owned with half a dozen properties of the local Pynkney estate. It has a long Anglo-Catholic history, mainly through its association with the Hand family. Fr William Hand was the principal of a Test school here, between 1924 and 1948. Over 200 boys passed matriculation through this school to be later ordained.

The traditional services, currently one Eucharist a month, have an average attendance of twelve. It has a warm, welcoming atmosphere and light refreshments are enjoyed in the church afterwards.

The PCC consists of two churchwardens, one of whom is the treasurer, a secretary, fabric officer, synod representative and a sidesman. The PCC is enthusiastic and has always had the community at its heart and been a strong support for the Rector. The Parish Share has been paid in full for the last two years and there is every confidence that this will continue. The electoral roll is 11.

Equally, the community has displayed its support for the church, with ten households making regular financial contributions.



The main fundraiser for the village, held after a service at St Margarets, is the harvest supper. Held in a house in the village, it regularly attracts 35-40 diners.

There is a need for a further major fundraising event, following the demise of the annual coffee morning, which had been a major source of income and very popular in the village.

Parish Facts	
Parish	Tatterford
Church	St Margaret
Area	1.6 miles ²
Demographics	
Population	72
Children and Young Adults	13
Working Age Adults	42
Retirement Age Adults	17
% Identifying as Christian	74
% Ethnic Minorities	1
Finances	
Parish Share 2023 (allocated)	£4,260.00
Parish Share 2022 (actual)	£3,774.00

St Martin at Tours Houghton PE31 6TZ



The parish is centred around the Houghton estate and mainly comprises thirty or so dwellings along the Street approaching the main gates to the Hall. Additional housing includes the Hall itself, some dwellings within the park and farmhouses, lodges and outlying dwellings within a mile or two. The regular church congregation is drawn from these but also from West Rudham, with occasional regular visitors from further afield. The church electoral roll currently numbers eighteen, the core congregation consists of around a dozen, though services sometimes muster up to fourteen or sixteen. A service of Holy Communion is held on one Sunday a month, with additionally a Passion Narrative on Good Friday, Carol Service on Christmas Eve and a Remembrance themed Eucharist on November 11th, St. Martins Day. These special occasions can generate congregations of between 30 and 90.

Though few in number, Houghton parishioners have generally managed to meet the parish share, with only rare exceptions in recent years. The small but loyal core congregation contributes to a church council of seven, several of whose members have led strong initiatives in fund raising which have helped towards parish share targets and church funds, though in this latter respect the generous patronage of the Cholmondeley family has been significant.

The church and its surrounding graveyard is situated within the park of the Houghton estate, making access less convenient, but producing a peaceful, contemplative ambience often commented upon by visitors who value

the tranquility so elusive in the bustle of the modern world.



Parish Facts	
Parish	Houghton-next-Harpley
Church	St Martin
Area	2.4 miles ²
Demographics	
Population	77
Children and Young Adults	15
Working Age Adults	45
Retirement Age Adults	17
% Identifying as Christian	71
% Ethnic Minorities	2
Finances	
Parish Share 2023 (allocated)	£4,260.00
Parish Share 2022 (actual)	£3,774.00

St Martins South Raynham. NR21 7HE



The Parish of South Raynham is in the picturesque Upper Wensum valley. The Historic landscape owes much to Charles “Turnip” Townshend, who with Coke of Norfolk, was a leader in the 18th C. Agricultural Revolution lived at Raynham Hall and the family live and farm there today. The village straddles the A1065 road (The Palmers’ Way to Walsingham). A garage, owned by a local family living on the spot, incorporates a good shop which serves the community and wider villages.



The 14th century Grade II* listed Church of St Martins is the epitome of an English Church, quietly located on the edge of the village, but dominating its surrounding landscape. The PCC consists of two Churchwardens and 4 other members, all of whom work closely together. This enabled them to initiate the internal and external restoration of the Church between 2017 and 2020, after raising c£350,000 from the National Lottery, charities, private donations, and other sources. A huge sum for a small community.

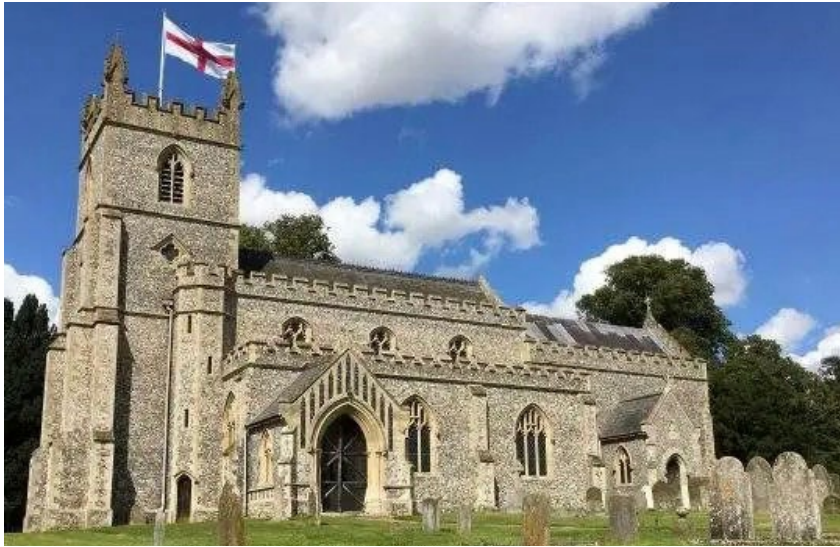
Although work is always needed, the Church is now in excellent condition, with an operational bell tower and well cared for churchyard and grounds. We are instructing preparation of a digital map of the churchyard. The Church has a 12th century Mensa single stone altar piece (Pevsner) and an important 19th c stain glass east window.

At present, we have one service of Holy Communion every month. Attendance varies from about 12 to 25 most Sundays, with larger numbers on Feast days. Our aim is very simple; we would like our church to be of greater service to the local people, for them to be involved, attract the young and for all to feel valued.

We might describe ourselves as modern, liberal catholic and we use a variation on the Common Worship Order One services. We are open to new thought and dialogue.

Parish Facts	
Parish	South Raynham
Church	St Martin
Area	1.7 miles ²
Demographics	
Population	99
Children and Young Adults	23
Working Age Adults	62
Retirement Age Adults	14
% Identifying as Christian	58
% Ethnic Minorities	3
Finances	
Parish Share 2023 (allocated)	£4,260.00
Parish Share 2022 (actual)	£2,500.00

St Marys East Raynham NR21 7ER with St Margarets West Raynham NR21 7EZ



St Marys is in a wonderful setting in the park of Raynham Hall, approximately one mile from West Raynham. Although historically the mainstay of parish life, the Raynham Estate has little involvement with the church in recent years.

In the village of West Raynham sits the picturesque ruins of Saint Margarets church which is looked after by the St. Margarets In Ruins Conservation Group. The churchyard is being managed as a wildlife conservation area worked on by local volunteers. We hold occasional services within the ruins. Also, within West Raynham lies the rectory which will be available for the new incumbent.

Paying the parish share is challenging. At present there is no involvement from the Kiptons and The Orchards. These are housing developments based on the former RAF base 3 miles from the village where there is a young population waiting to be welcomed into the church community.



Parish Facts	
Parish	East w/ West Raynham
Church	St Mary / St Margaret
Area	4.8 miles ²
Demographics	
Population	247
Children and Young Adults	57
Working Age Adults	155
Retirement Age Adults	35
% Identifying as Christian	57
% Ethnic Minorities	3
Finances	
Parish Share 2023 (allocated)	£ 4,260.00
Parish Share 2022 (actual)	£500.00

St Marys East with West Rudham PE31 8RA



In a group of parishes with populations in the low hundreds, East and West Rudham is the geographic and demographic centre of the benefice. It is home to the benefice's only School and straddles the busy A148 coast road. The villages boast two popular gastro pubs, a coffee shop, deli, recently opened gelato parlour and an egg shop. A large playing field, multi-use games area and village hall are also well used by community groups.



Rudham School originally opened in 1858 for children of labourers and poorer classes in both East and West Rudham. Having been modified over the years the school joined the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust in 2006 to be renamed Rudham Church of England Primary Academy. It boasts 74 pupils and would welcome a priest for School Assemblies.

West Rudham's 13th century church dedicated to St Peter is in the care of Norfolk Churches Trust, and has only hosted occasional services in recent years. Proactively managed for wildlife the extended church yard is still open to burials.

St Marys is a medieval 13th Century church which was largely rebuilt in 1876 following the collapse of the

tower. It has both water and electricity and is in fairly good standing. We have some weather damage in the chancel area which is currently in the process of being surveyed and fixed. The church presently has one service per month. We use the Book of Common Prayer. Services are generally not well attended by the community. The bells were recently restored, however the bell-ringers group, which formed around this time, have not returned to church following covid.

St Marys has often been a focal point and host to significant celebrations in the villages, however a combination of the retirement of our priest, the covid lockdowns and loss of several instrumental parishioners has caused the parish to lose that vitality. The parish no longer has a PCC or any churchwardens to help with running the church. However up until recently we have always paid our full Parish Share and our housekeeping costs. One of the challenges we would look to a future priest-in-charge to help us with would be to continue the renaissance of this particular parish, a process we begun to undertake as a group.

Parish Facts	
Parish	East with West Rudham
Church	St Mary
Area	11.5 miles ²
Demographics	
Population	774
Children and Young Adults	127
Working Age Adults	449
Retirement Age Adults	198
% Identifying as Christian	68
% Ethnic Minorities	1
Finances	
Parish Share 2023 (allocated)	£4,260.00
Parish Share 2022 (actual)	£3,774.00

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