

# SOMERLEYTON GROUP BENEFACTICE PROFILE 2024



**St Mary Somerleyton**



**St Mary Ashby**



**St Mary the Virgin Blundeston  
with Flixton**

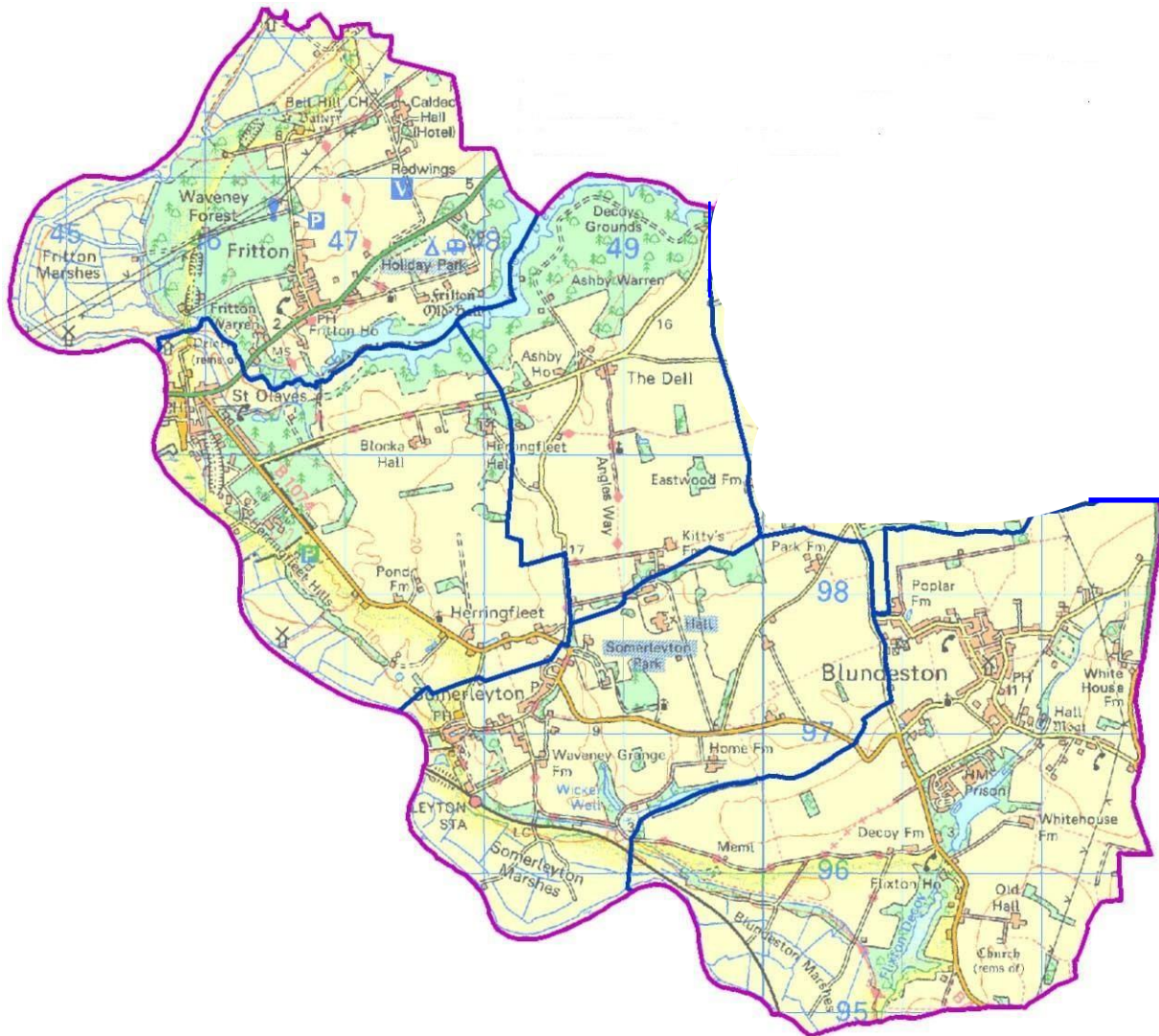


**St Edmund Fritton**



**St Margaret Herringfleet**

# THE SOMERLEYTON GROUP



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# *Could this be you?*

## **Our Vision**

We would like our churches to grow in influence for good in the community and by our example encourage more people of all ages to join us in regular worship.

### **We are looking for a priest who:**

1. can develop our understanding of God and his word;
2. will continue to build up the togetherness of our Group;
3. has a real love of people and understands, and is comfortable with country life;
4. will help us, guide us and lead us to bring new and younger people into the churches with a monthly family service;
5. prays for and with us and enriches our worship and its relevance in our lives;
6. encourages outreach in our parishes with the Christian gospel;
7. understands the advantages of good administration, communication, and being visible around the benefice.

### **We can offer you:**

1. A warm, welcoming, group of churches in beautiful countryside.
2. A commitment to the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing.
3. The opportunity to work with five parishes.
4. Committed, willing, supportive and hard-working congregations.
5. Our prayerful and working support.
6. A four-bedroomed bungalow Rectory in Somerleyton, opposite the Village School, set in part of the Somerleyton estate.
7. Expenses are paid in full each month.

# WELCOME TO THE SOMERLEYTON BENEFICE

We are a benefice of five parishes with Great Yarmouth to the north and Lowestoft to the south. We are mainly in the beautiful north Suffolk countryside, bounded by the A47 to the east and the River Waveney to the west. The hovercraft was invented by Sir Christopher Cockerell on the lawns of Somerleyton Hall. Across the benefice there are many footpaths, which are wonderful for walking, including a section of the Angles Way. With the Broads on our doorstep, the marina at Somerleyton and a boatyard just outside Fritton and Herringfleet, many tourists are attracted to the area.

Our benefice came together over 25 years ago; one of our previous Incumbents went from us to become the Rector at Sandringham. Our most recent incumbent moved away for family reasons and we are now looking for a new incumbent who can bring more life into our churches.

Could you be the person we are looking for?

There are five churches in our benefice:

St Mary Ashby  
St Mary the Virgin Blundeston (with St Andrew Flixton)  
St Edmund Fritton  
St Margaret Herringfleet  
St Mary Somerleyton

Our benefice is essentially agricultural, though we do have several pubs and garden centres with cafes. There are two primary schools, at Somerleyton and at Blundeston, one of which is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled School. There are also thriving pre-schools at Blundeston and Somerleyton. There are a variety of high schools beyond the benefice and young people travel to schools in Beccles, Gorleston, Loddon or Lowestoft. Regular trains operate between Norwich and Lowestoft, stopping at Somerleyton.

Much of the land is part of the Somerleyton estate which attracts many visitors to Somerleyton Hall each year; the estate provides some local employment. Property in the area is mixed, with some estate tenancies, some local authority housing and many owner occupied homes of varying sizes including several high-value private houses. Charles Dickens was associated with Blundeston (indeed he was so taken with Blundeston that David Copperfield was 'born' here) and this gives some properties a certain cachet!

Our benefice is a 'sought after' area, quietly rural yet within easy reach of its two adjacent towns and, of course, Norwich itself. We are welcoming, with a concern for our environment and for one another.

Bonded together through earlier incumbencies we are a healthy co-operative benefice to which each parish contributes. We love to share with each other, support each other and work with each other. Each month we produce a Group magazine; we also have a joint Group Council that meets four times a year, shapes common ventures and agrees a great deal!

The whole benefice takes safeguarding seriously. There is a Benefice Safeguarding Officer and each parish follows the Church of England Safeguarding Dashboard, being at either level 2 or 3. Our churches have also adopted the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing.

Inter-parish events, such as Lent Lunches, Harvest Suppers and our Rogation Day walk are well supported. We have, in the past, held a lively midweek study group which, if re-started, would enable us to study together as well as worshipping and having fun together. Four of the five villages have good village hall facilities which are well used by the community. There are no church halls.

Our charitable work includes the giving of Christmas gifts to a school in a deprived area of Gt. Yarmouth, covering ages 2 to 11 years.

We deliver a Christmas card to every house in the benefice, giving details of all our Christmas services.

Our services all use the same format from Common Worship for Holy Communion; with the BCP for Matins and Evensong; and adapted other forms for Songs of Praise and other such services. The group is mainly of central church tradition.

Since covid, we have had one group service of Holy Communion per week in the benefice and are continuing with this during the interregnum. Churchwardens have also taken services of Songs of Praise, Harvest Festivals, Flower Festivals and Carol Services, etc. We hope to move forward with a morning service of Holy Communion and an Evensong or Songs of Praise each week, with a Family Service included once a month. We are open to your suggestions of alternative services – ‘Messy Church’ for young people, for example.

We are part of the Deanery of Lothingland. The deanery is clustered around Lake Lothing (hence its name) and includes the town of Lowestoft, stretching from Hopton in the north to Kessingland in the south, and from the sea in the east to Herringfleet in the west. The deanery is part of Suffolk county, as are most of our parishes (just Fritton being in Norfolk), but is part of the Diocese of Norwich.

Should you like an informal conversation about this position, please contact our Rural Dean, the Reverend Helen Jary, on 01502 561546.

# ST. MARY, ASHBY

The parish of Ashby covers an area of about 1000 acres, most of which is arable land and woodland. St Mary's Church is nestled within the Somerleyton Estate in open fields where the Ashby village originally stood. The isolated thatched church is accessed down half a mile of bridleway and is signposted on the main road. It is popular with walkers as they pass on the Angles Way. We are considering the construction of a prayer labyrinth in the churchyard.



The building is well maintained by a small diligent team who have dealt with all the major items in the most recent Quinquennial Report. The church has also recently installed a sound system, under-pew heating, and a churchyard car park area.

We financially support local charity The Access Community Trust which provides a range of services for young people including housing related support, helping with learning, development and employment and providing support with mental health and wellbeing.



The church has two church wardens and an organist. Popular services are the Carol Service and Harvest Festival. Also popular, and unique within the benefice, is Ashby's Rogation Service, which begins with a leisurely walk along the bridleway, blessing the crops on the way (*photos below*).

The church is not normally utilised in the darker evenings, with the exception of the carol service mentioned, as there are no lights along the bridleway.

There are no water facilities at the church.

The size of the church, with a capacity of perhaps sixty, makes for a cosy, intimate and welcoming setting for services.



**ASHBY CHURCH – Group Lent Lunch at Somerleyton Hall**



**ASHBY CHURCH – Rogation Sunday, Blessing the Crops and Communion Service**



# ST MARY THE VIRGIN, BLUNDESTON (WITH ST ANDREW, FLIXTON)

The Church is a round towered, Grade 1 listed Saxon Church.

The building is in a good state of repair, and has been brought up to date with a loop system, access for wheelchairs and pushchairs and a space within the congregation for these. Toilet facilities are available. The church pathways have been widened to become access friendly.



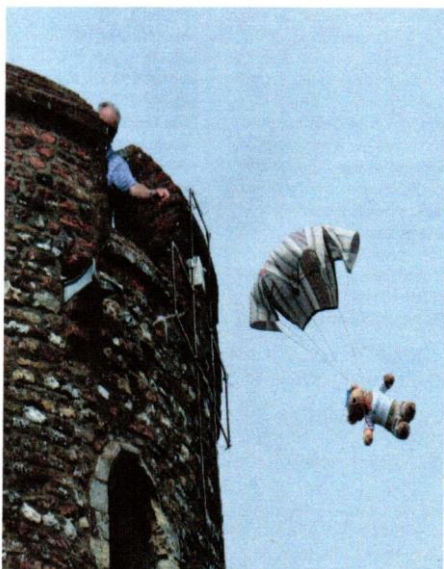
As well as our regular Sunday services we host occasional Songs of Praise (involving the whole community) at times like Harvest, or our Flower Festival. Our Christmas Carols and Epiphany Carols are always well attended and the Crib Service on Christmas Eve is always full to overflowing! There is an annual service in memory of the departed.

We used to have a Eucharist Service every Tuesday at 9.30 a.m. with an average attendance of 8. We would like to see this service started again.

Our Churchmanship is central with a tradition of Eucharistic worship with vestments. The Blessed Sacrament is perpetually reserved.

We have an organist and a team of Epistle readers and Intercessors. One person, with a deputy, is responsible for funeral arrangements. There is a dedicated team of volunteers who keep the churchyard looking immaculate.

Blundeston Prison was sold a few years ago and a local developer is building new houses and some facilities for local people. As each home becomes occupied we will make communication with them, including delivering the benefice Christmas card.



We have a great relationship with the village we serve; the village community supports our fund raising activities. Meanwhile we support a number of charities and choose one Charity each year for a donation from a special service.

As part of our Annual Flower Festival we have included Teddy Bear Parachuting which brings in young and old alike with their treasured Teddy to participate. One such brave Teddy can be seen opposite!

We hold an Art and Craft Fair with many stalls, in October each year. The Church is used for



concerts in aid of various Charities. This has been complemented by the acquisition of a grand piano several years ago.

The local Primary School holds lessons in the Church at least once a week, and use the building to host concerts and Nativity Plays for parents to enjoy. They also have a permanent display of their artwork changing with the seasons.



Other activities within our village include:

- A Pre-School with their own building;

- A Village Hall with a large, well-equipped play area;

- A Millennium Green;

- Beavers, Cubs and Scouts for children from the age of 6 years. (We hold a Group Remembrance Service and the Scout Movement parades from the village hall and joins us for this service).

Local groups include the Women's Institute, Local History Society and Blundeston in Bloom (who have won a gold medal in the Village in Bloom competition).

There are Football, Tennis and Bowling Green facilities. We also have Holly Gardens Nurseries which includes the popular Sally Ann's Tearoom.

Many houses and streets in the village have Dickensian names because Charles Dickens wrote in his famous novel that David Copperfield was born in Blundeston! He visited the village whilst he was staying at Somerleyton Hall with Sir Morton Peto; and Blundeston Plough must have been so welcoming that he decided that our village was the perfect setting for his story.



# ST EDMUND, FRITTON



Fritton, the small Norfolk village, borders the lake also known as the Fritton Decoy, part of the Somerleyton Estate which crosses the Norfolk/Suffolk border. The population of Fritton is approximately 240. The Parish Magazine is delivered to 100 households in the village.

It has a well maintained village hall which is used for social gatherings, Lent Lunches, wedding and thanksgiving of lives following funerals and interment of ashes. Many other weekly events take place at the village hall, such as Coffee Mornings in aid of Motor Neurone Disease, Young Musicians Band Practice, Dog Training, Wellbeing Group, Spiritual and Wellbeing Meetings, etc.

The Church is well suited for visitors and is on the Angles Way walking route and a step away from the A143.

The church is opened 7 days a week for 49 weeks of the year; visitors come from near and worldwide. In addition, entry is made available, when permissible, to 'Open Churches Week' and the 'Annual Sponsored Bike Ride.'



The church dates back to Saxon times, scroll work in the apse dates to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the mural paintings, the figures of St John the Baptist and St Christopher in the nave from the 14<sup>th</sup> C.

The church is in a good state of repair; when building upkeep arises, it is dealt with promptly.

The parishioners are a loyal group led by a dedicated Churchwarden of almost four decades. Songs of Praise is led by the Churchwarden standing in when ordained ministers are not available, as when in a period of interregnum.

It is acknowledged that we need help and guidance, especially to bring new and younger people into the church, and in addition encourage and advertise regular family services.

Churchmanship is central. At this present time regular services are conducted on a rota system, one every 6 weeks, averaging a congregation of 30 plus. There are usually two weddings each year and a similar number of funerals and baptisms.

There are currently seven on the electoral roll and three members of the PCC including the Churchwarden and Secretary. The PCC is grateful for the skilled support of the Treasurer and Auditor who are not members. We acknowledge the invaluable leadership of the Group Safeguarding Officer.

The life of the church calendar is upheld by dedicated members, friends and their families, those who maintain, clean, decorate and contribute to Fritton Church. During the church year the community are welcomed to the church with regular coffee mornings, and a social gathering where people meet and greet and enjoy the company of others. Donating produce and purchasing in return, helping toward the upkeep of the fabric and contributing so much more. The Flower Festival Weekend in July and a loyal band of people bring their skills and imaginations to decorate this wonderful country church. A range of visitors come from two counties and beyond, each with their own special story and connections to St Edmunds Fritton. Sunday culminates with a Service of Thanksgiving in a place of worship.

As the year closes St Edmunds holds a Carol Service by Candlelight (in 2021 with an invited soloist) and a Christmas Eve Communion when families from all across the benefice come through the door.

Bordered by the River Waveney and the Common Forest walks to the north and west. Leisure facilities include Caldecott Hall golf and recreation, Fritton Plant Centre and Red Wings Horse Sanctuary. With Gorleston beach only four miles away and Gt Yarmouth beyond, it is a sought-after residential area, with a good ratio of local families.



# FRITTON CHURCH

Flower Festival, Coronation Service, Volunteers and Visitors



Churchwarden (*above*) and organist (*below*)



Fritton Church, continued



## ST MARGARET, HERRINGFLEET

The parish consists of Herringfleet in Suffolk and St. Olaves in Norfolk. The village of Herringfleet is immediately adjacent to Somerleyton and is sparsely populated with only about 50 people. Many of the properties are in the ownership of the Somerleyton Estate. St. Olaves is a popular Broads centre two miles from Herringfleet with a population of 300 and has a number of privately owned higher value properties.



Of the five churches, Herringfleet has the most prominent location, standing on high ground overlooking the Waveney valley and visible from several miles away. It is a grade one listed building with a Saxon tower and a remarkable east window. The tower was restored in the 1980s and the chancel was re-roofed in 2012. We were successful in securing a lottery grant in 2017 which covered the cost of re-thatching the nave and porch, installing ground drainage system, under-pew heating and new lighting.

Herringfleet is the focal point of the group on two important occasions. On Good Friday a Walk of Witness starts at 'The Green' in Somerleyton and arrives at St Margarets for coffee and hot cross buns followed by a service, and on Christmas Day we hold a well attended group family service. A group service is held every six weeks, alternating with the other four churches in the benefice.

A very popular church with visitors, it is open every day when weather permits and a Friends Group is being set up to organise social events.



**ST OLAVES PRIORY** is situated within the parish. It is an English Heritage site consisting of the Augustinian Priory ruins. A bi-annual outdoor service (alternating with St Andrew's Church in Flixton) has been held in the past.



St Olaves also boasts a Marina offering boat hire; a Garage; a Pub (The Bell Inn, reportedly Broadland's oldest recorded Inn) and a Village Hall offering weekly events like Dog Training, a Saxon and Viking Re-enactment Society and Middle Eastern Dance!

There is truly something for everyone within our benefice!

# ST MARY, SOMERLEYTON

St Mary the Virgin, Somerleyton is a listed Grade II building situated one mile from the village within the grounds of the Somerleyton Hall Estate. Originally built in the 15th Century and extensively renovated in 1854, it contains many historical features, including a beautifully preserved 15th century screen. The Font is also 15th century with a Jacobean cover added in the 17th century.



The Bell Tower contains six bells, ringing for special services.

The general condition of the church building is in good repair. Projects carried out in recent years include:

- ~ Replacement of existing lighting and heating with more efficient units;
- ~ Complete restoration of the Bell Tower including replacement of decayed stonework, corner pinnacles and dragons, and the tower roof lead;
- ~ The construction of a new and bigger Car Park;
- ~ Installation of a loop and sound amplification system.

A legacy has allowed architects' plans to be drawn up for a toilet and kitchen area at the back of the church and the faculty is in the final stages. Access to the organ also to be re-positioned during these works.



Our special Festival Services include:

Easter Sunday Hunt	Family Service & Easter Egg Hunt
Harvest Festival	Praise Service
Flower Festival weekend	Celebration - in the second Of September
Christingle/Carols	Christmas Tree Festival during the first weekend of December
Christmas Eve	Holy Communion 11.30pm
Pet Service	



Somerleyton Village is a lively and welcoming village with:

- rail links to Lowestoft/Norwich/London;
- a public house, close to the river;
- a bowls club;
- a village hall used by various groups including a pre-school during term time, a badminton court, Village ladies' Women's Link monthly meetings, Parish Council meetings, Films, Quiz evenings, Swing-fit, etc.;
- a cycle shop which serves ice-cream and refreshments in the summer months, as well as cycle repairs/sales and hire all year round;
- a playing field with tennis courts and a cricket pitch.



# OUR SCHOOLS

There are two primary schools within the benefice. Both schools have, in the past, had an excellent relationship with the Rector. This is an important part of Christian ministry within our benefice and it is hoped that our new priest will take an interest in both schools, visiting them, taking part in collective worship and possibly contributing to religious education lessons.

## BLUNDESTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOL



Blundeston School is a Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School for 210 pupils. It was awarded a grade of “Good” by OFSTED in 2019.

The following article “Enjoying Bible stories” appeared in the current (Summer 2023) edition of PCC News and was written by Helen Laflin, Headteacher of Blundeston CEVC Primary School:

“Our school is currently without an incumbent at the local church. So we have had to be creative in how we have worked with local clergy, particularly as we are expecting our SIAMS inspection any day!

Throughout this period, we have been keen to ensure our children continue to experience the joy of collective worship being led by a range of people. For this reason, we reached out and have formed a really positive working relationship with Reverend Andy Bunter from the Oulton Broad Parish.

Andy has been incredibly supportive of the school in our SIAMS preparation, as well as leading whole school collective worship on a range of subjects, from Lent to Remembrance Day and the Queen’s funeral. He was also brave enough to lead Q&A sessions with every class!

Andy has also facilitated the introduction of Open the Book sessions into school – something we had been trying to establish for some time! These sessions are really popular with the school community, particularly the sessions where the children get to dress up and join in.

The children look forward to these sessions and the impact has been significant. They will talk about them for several days afterwards and tell us how much they enjoy the Bible stories being brought to life for them.

We continue to visit and use our local church, as a base for collective worship, celebrations and also for RE and other lessons.”

There is an independent pre-school in the village, too.

## SOMERLEYTON COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL



The school, situated opposite the Rectory, has always had an excellent relationship with the Incumbent and is generally supportive. Past Rectors have acted as governors, taken an interest in the children and occasionally led collective worship. The committed staff foster a love of learning, promote independence and celebrate every child's achievements, teaching them to value each other. They provide a welcoming, safe environment where core values include ambition, respect and excellence. The children, staff and parents come to the church at Christmas for their Nativity. They also take part in our Flower Festival and Christmas Tree Festival.

# THE RECTORY



The Rectory is a four bedroom detached bungalow with oil fired central heating, some sealed window units and secondary double glazing. It is set in spacious gardens with a turn-around drive, single garage and views overlooking the Somerleyton estate.

There is a cloakroom, a study (about 17' by 10') and an inner hallway leading to the lounge (23' by 13'), a central dining room (18' by 11'), a kitchen (16' by 13') and a utility room. There are four bedrooms, a bathroom and a shower room. There is a wood burner in the lounge.



(Please note all measurements are approximate to the nearest foot)



Outside there is a covered log store with double gate, a covered parking area, leading to a Single garage. There is a separate brick built workshop/store. Lawned gardens surround the bungalow with mature trees and hedges to the boundaries. There are two storage sheds, and the oil storage tank.