

**Brooke Benefice**

**Hempnall Group**



**Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic**

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**Brooke Benefice  
*and the*  
Hempnall Group**



# Welcome to our Profile

## Who we are

We are the Brooke Benefice and the Hempnall Group of Parishes, two well-established multi-parish benefices and friendly next-door-neighbours within the Depwade Deanery. We have similar populations, church traditions and worship styles, encompassing Common Worship with a mix of Eucharistic and Morning Worship, an occasional evening prayer (including by Zoom), celebrating with our animals, Taizé and Celtic based services. Each of us wishes to remain legally separate with our own respective governance and unique identities: however, we have been working in co-operation since early 2022 and have now decided, both being in vacancy, to seek to recruit together a new clergy team, consisting of a full-time position and a part-time House for Duty Associate Priest, to provide leadership across all our parishes. Following previous advertisement, the House for Duty post has recently been filled by the Rev'd Canon Susanna Gunner, who is joining us in January 2026.

If you are interested in making an application, we hope this profile will help guide you in the path that God has chosen for you and we pray that you might be excited by the idea of being part of both our benefices.

## Post available

Together, and sharing our available resources, we now have available one **post** as follows (our new part-time House for Duty post having been recently filled as noted).

❖ **A full-time stipendiary priest** to be initially Priest-in-Charge (and subsequently Incumbent when patronage – currently suspended – is restored) in **both** benefices

This is an exciting and unusual opportunity to forge a brand-new clergy team, offering the advantages of joint working and a collaborative approach to ministry both between the two clergy posts and with a strong lay ministry team. Further support is provided by a part-time employed administrator.

*The exact details of the working arrangements between the two posts will be settled in discussion with the appointees and recorded in working agreements as appropriate.*

# Where you will find us



## Brooke Benefice

- Saint Peter's Brook
- Saint Peter's Mundham
- Saint Margaret Kirstead
- St Margaret and St Remigius Seething
- Saint Mary Thwaite

## Hempnall Group

- Saint Margaret Hempnall
- All Saints Woodton
- Saint Catherine Fritton
- Saint John the Baptist Morningshoe
- Saint Mary Shelton
- Saint Margaret Hardwick
- Saint Margaret Topcroft
- Saint Andrew Bedingham

# The Priest we seek

We are looking for another spiritual and prayerful leader who will work collaboratively with Canon Susanna Gunner and the lay members of our combined Ministry Team to strengthen our relationships with God and each other, both within our churches and the wider community.

We are seeking a minister who is:

- ❖ A team player, able to recognise and facilitate the development of others
- ❖ An approachable, supportive leader who will inspire and enrich people of all ages and backgrounds
- ❖ A good listener and communicator
- ❖ Compassionate and able to relate to everyone through strong pastoral skills, encouraging and supporting others to do the same
- ❖ Eager to take an imaginative and creative approach in strengthening our mission and outreach
- ❖ Able to thrive and be actively present within community life whilst understanding the characteristics of rural ministry
- ❖ Willing to embrace and build on a variety of worship styles

# What we can offer

- ❖ A warm and friendly welcome
- ❖ Opportunity to build and develop a new clergy team
- ❖ Collaborative working between clergy and lay members of our Ministry Team and with other volunteers
- ❖ An opportunity to lead and inspire in the sharing of the gospel to all our communities
- ❖ Care for your wellbeing through the support you will receive from all of us
- ❖ Friendly and supportive PCCs (and a Joint Council for the Hempnall Group)
- ❖ Administrator who works across the Benefices with solid admin systems in place
- ❖ A lovely home in which to live, work and relax
- ❖ A stunning beautiful country setting close to Norwich, the coast and the Broads
- ❖ Good links with our local schools
- ❖ Well-maintained church buildings



# The role

- ❖ Building on the strong foundations in and between each benefice, to take us forward in developing, demonstrating and sharing our faith
- ❖ To bring the message of Christ alive, strengthening spiritual life through teaching and prayer
- ❖ To nurture relationships with people of all ages with a vision of how to bring young people into our churches
- ❖ To lead us in providing sensitive pastoral care and friendship to all those who need it, including outreach to local care homes and working with local schools
- ❖ To support and encourage the laity
- ❖ To be a visible presence in our parishes and participate actively in the community life of our villages
- ❖ To take account of the individual needs of our churches and communities, recognising that each has a distinct identity
- ❖ To appreciate and build on the contribution made by music to worship



# Our People

## Our Ministry Team

### ***House for Duty Associate Priest***

Our part-time House for Duty Associate Priest (Canon Susanna Gunner), based in Hempnall Rectory, is jointly licensed to both benefices.

### ***Lay Members***

We have two Licensed Lay Ministers (John Ash, with 37 years of experience, based in the Brooke Benefice; and Liam Pilgrim, newly licensed but with many years' experience of lay ministry, based in the Hempnall Group) and one in training (Tim Francis - Hempnall Group). In addition, there are two Authorised Worship Assistants (Jackie Mahony – Hempnall Group; and Angela Garner – Brooke Benefice).

Note: The Rev'd Michael Windridge is licensed to the Hempnall Group (where he lives) as an Associate Priest (non-stipendiary) so as to enable his appointment as Rural Dean of Depwade; he is available to officiate (usually on one or two Sundays per month and at some 'life event' services) but is not involved in Group 'management'.

### **Brooke Benefice**

The Benefice of Brooke comprises 4 parishes and 5 churches:  
Brooke (St. Peter); Kirstead (St. Margaret);  
Mundham (St. Peter) with Seething (St. Margaret and St. Remegius);  
Thwaite St. Mary (St. Mary).

Each parish has its own PCC including Lay Chairs, Churchwardens and Treasurers. We hold joint PCC meetings.

Benefice Safeguarding Officer – Laura Cowan

### **Hempnall Group**

The Hempnall Group comprises 6 parishes and 8 churches:  
Bedingham (St Andrew); Hempnall (St Margaret);  
Morningthorpe (St John the Baptist) and Fritton (St Catherine);  
Shelton (St Mary) with Hardwick (St Margaret); Topcroft (St Margaret);  
Woodton (All Saints).

The Hempnall Group has a Joint Council (with 2 lay Co-Chairs) to deal with benefice-wide arrangements while individual PCCs and their officers retain responsibility for local matters.

Benefice Safeguarding Officer – Lorraine Zima

**We share a part-time (employed) Administrator.** We plan all our church services together and information about these as well as local events is circulated to parishioners across both benefices in our joint *Weekly Benefice News*. We also produce and publish in common a monthly prayer diary and reflection. While each PCC has its own Treasurer for local finance business, we share a 'group' Treasurer to manage the disbursement of fees and the payment of clergy expenses and some expenditure in common.

# Mission and Outreach

Our mission is to share and demonstrate the Christian faith in our local communities. We do this not only by providing services of worship but by seeking to offer hospitality, comfort, love and support to all.

We welcome everyone (including our many visitors) into our churches, which are open for private reflection and prayer or simply for respite, as places of quiet and peace.

We also reach out through local, individual pastoral contacts (including Home Communions) and through various forms of community engagement, including our published communications, social events, concerts and talks.

We have a strong track record of generous outward-giving: for example, we have recently raised £1,000 from our Harvest collections for Send a Nanny Goat (via Christian Aid) and the Trussell Trust (for UK foodbanks). Both benefices support local foodbanks on an ongoing basis, as well as other locally based charities such as Emmaus (homelessness) and YANA (rural mental health).

We strive to celebrate and care for creation and our individual parishes are encouraged to participate in the Eco Church programme.



## Safeguarding

We are determined to keep everyone safe. All our PCCs are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Our safeguarding policies align with CofE Safeguarding Policy and Safer Recruitment Policy and are displayed in all our churches. Safeguarding Officers are in place in each Benefice (see 'Our People') and act as Parish Safeguarding Officers. We regularly review our practices and safeguarding is on the agenda at every PCC meeting.

# Living in South Norfolk

Living in South Norfolk with its vast skies and expansive countryside is fun, accessible and relaxing!

We are fortunate to be within close proximity to Norwich (regular bus services from Brooke and Hempnall) with its beautiful Norman cathedral, an ancient castle which houses a museum and many interesting alleys and small independent shops, in addition to a good range of national stores. The permanent outdoor market is a special feature and the theatre attracts high quality touring companies. There are two universities: UEA and Norwich University of the Arts. UEA has on its site the Sainsbury Centre which houses an important art gallery. Norwich City football team is well supported locally.

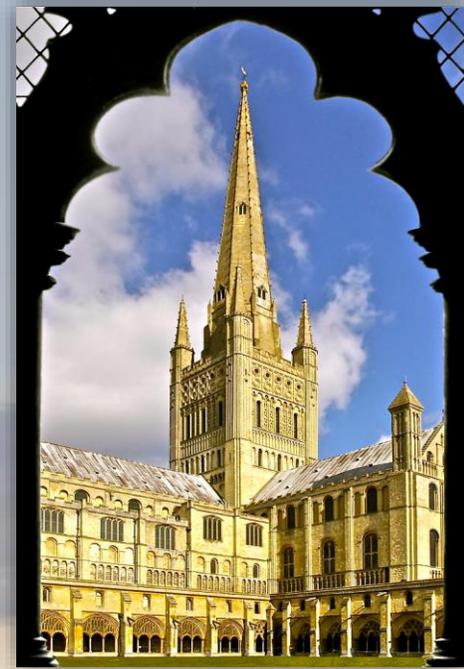
There are excellent schools in the area for children of all ages including five nurseries across both benefices.

You'll find beautiful country walks from your door and plenty of farm shops, cafés, vineyards and garden centres to stop for a coffee, glass of local wine or to enjoy locally grown produce. There are several small market towns nearby.

The beautiful sandy beaches of the Norfolk and Suffolk coasts are easily accessible.

The Norfolk Broads with their 200 miles of navigable waterways are within easy reach, offering a wealth of opportunity whether you love watersports, sailing, bird watching or want a lazy day cruising around on a boat.

Norwich Airport is only around a 40-minute drive with national and international flights and easy access to the whole world via a short hop through Amsterdam. Fast trains mean that trips or commutes to London are possible from Norwich or Diss stations.



# Living in Brooke

**Brooke** is a beautiful village set in the heart of the South Norfolk countryside. Its proximity to Norwich allows its c.1,400 residents to enjoy the best of both worlds – the tranquility of the surrounding relaxing country walks plus the bustle of a vibrant city.

The village has a wonderful community with its people and the stunning Meres at its heart.

The village CofE Primary School has close links with the church and regularly visit for celebration services. The school is part of the Sunflower Federation with Hempnall.

We also have several thriving clubs and associations including cricket, bowls, tennis, table tennis, badminton, WI, Scouts and Guides. The Village Hall and grounds are large and used regularly to host a variety of village activities including the Wednesday morning drop-in café and the annual Brooke fireworks display.

We have two public houses, the traditional thatched White Lion by the Meres and The King's Head on the Norwich road where you can treat yourself to a fabulous Sunday lunch.

Our very own 'shopping complex' comprises a butcher and deli with a section to grab your emergency supplies, a café, a Pilates/yoga studio, a florist and a hairdresser.

We also have a vets in the village and in nearby Poringland you will find doctors, dentists, takeaways and convenience stores.

# Living in Hempnall

**Hempnall** (where the part-time Associate Priest will be living) is the largest village in the Hempnall Group of Parishes, set in the beautiful South Norfolk countryside, with a population of around 1,300.

It is a friendly village with an excellent modern and spacious Village Hall offering a wide range of activities. This is adjacent to a well-maintained playing field with football pitches, an outstanding, recently fully refurbished children's play area and excellent tennis courts where an enthusiastic tennis club operates.

In addition, the Mill Centre, supported by a village charitable Trust in a converted Windmill, provides lunches, in house (or delivered) and a monthly coffee morning. It operates a bar on Friday evenings (with a food truck) and on Saturdays. The artisan bakery in the village runs a pop-up shop there on Saturday mornings.

The school in Hempnall is linked with the school in Brooke to form the Sunflower Federation and shares a Head Teacher. With about 160 pupils, it is Ofsted-rated good. There is an active Friends organisation. A popular Day Nursery is a 5-minute drive away.

We also benefit from a convenience store, a GP surgery (with pharmacy) - linked to a larger medical practice in Poringland (15-minute drive) - a vet, a pub in Hempnall Green (the Three Horse Shoes) and a fish stall, visiting weekly.

This popular village has a wonderful community spirit and a team of welcomers who give newcomers a 'Welcome' booklet listing village facilities.

A network of footpaths runs from the village. Recently a small estate of 23 houses has been developed to the rear of the Village Hall and currently East Pye have submitted plans for solar parks in the area.

# The Clergy Houses

## Brooke

The Vicarage is a sizable home, built in the 1980s and is situated directly opposite the church with easy access to the surrounding countryside. There are four bedrooms, two bathrooms, a spacious lounge, kitchen with separate dining room, a good-sized study, a double garage and large driveway.



## Hempnall

The Rectory (to be lived in by the part-time House for Duty Priest) is situated in The Street within a short walking distance of the shop, school and church. The Office for our two benefices occupies an *annex* which has separate access.





# Brooke Benefice

# Brooke Benefice – Worship

Our churches are happy, inclusive places where everyone is welcome.

We typically hold a 10.30am service at one of our benefice churches followed by coffee and chat. Our congregations don't just stick to their 'own' parish church.

Our format is usually Common Worship. However, we also use the beautiful thatched Thwaite Church for Café Church, a relaxed reflective service. There are occasional joint services with the Hempnall Group. Prior to vacancy our Sunday morning worship was typically a Eucharist service.

We hold a weekly morning prayer meeting in our Church Room and join the Hempnall Group for a monthly evening worship service on Zoom which includes prayer, readings and illustrated reflection.

There are currently 109 people on the Electoral Rolls and attendance at our services is typically around 30-40, often rising to over 100 for special services.

We hold around 5 baptisms and weddings and 15 funerals each year.



# Brooke Benefice – Music

**Music** plays a really important part of the worship in our benefice. Each of our churches has an organ and we have a dedicated organist (Brian Orland) who also conducts the choir: they sing robed at Brooke Church and often sing anthems at our other services. We are also lucky enough to have a second organist who sings with the choir and assists Brian with music selection.

We have evensong services and a regular ‘songs of praise’ service with music chosen by the congregation. A carol service is held in every parish, including a Service of Nine Lessons and Carols in Brooke.



**Fine City Chorus**  
perform  
'Music for a Summer's Evening'  
Saturday 20th July, 7 PM  
St. Peter's Church, Brooke

A male Barbershop chorus singing a variety of well-known songs in wonderful four-part 'A Cappella' close harmony

*Norwich Diocesan Association  
of Ringers*

**St Peter's, Brooke**  
Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2009

A Peal of 5040 changes of Plain Bob Doubles  
was rung in 2 hours 47 minutes

Treble	Jonathan C Wilde
2	John R V Ash
3	Bawn C Pullan
4	Charles A Wilde
5	Paul J Norris (C)
Tenor	Jan Overton

First peal for the ringers of the treble, 4th and tenor bells and the first peal ever by an all-Brooke Sunday-service band.

<u>Vicar</u>	<u>Church Wardens</u>
Revd. J Howard Robson	Bayne C Warman Rosemary J Sarford



Brooke Church has a wonderful set of bells rung regularly, including as a welcome to our Sunday service. Our very enthusiastic bell ringers can be heard by villagers practising on Thursday evenings. The bells were rehung in 2018.

The church plays host to concerts by local musicians and musical societies including recently the Fine City Chorus. These concerts have raised money for both the church and various charities.

# Brooke Benefice – Festivals and Special Events

We celebrate whatever the weather! Whether it's a wet afternoon, strawberry tea or a sunny picnic service we are fortunate to have members of the congregation who are happy to open their garden gates for a variety of social events.



Strawberry tea



Palm Sunday



Flowers for Harvest

We observe Holy Week with a Good Friday pilgrimage and evening compline services on Zoom.



Picnic service



Pet Service

Dedicated teams of flower arrangers in all our churches provide fabulous displays on a regular basis but especially for our Harvest Festivals.

# Brooke Benefice – Communication and Finances

Brooke PCC publishes a magazine 6 times a year, for Brooke and Kirstead, giving details of all the church services in the benefice as well as other church matters, events and fund-raisers. It includes information on the numerous clubs, groups and organisations in the village, as well as containing a directory of businesses and services within the Brooke and Kirstead area. The advertising fees ensure the magazine is delivered free of charge to residents in Kirstead and Brooke. The magazine is also placed in the other churches and village shop.

## Finances

Benefice/Parish Share	£ Requested 2024	£ Paid 2024
Brooke	22,681	17,832
Kirstead	2,520	2,520
Mundham & Seething	4,095	2,402
Thwaite	2,205	2,205
<b>Benefice Total</b>	<b>31,501</b>	<b>24,959</b>



Volunteer deliverer

# Brooke

**St Peter's** Church is one of Norfolk's round tower churches and was built in the 13th century. The tower houses a bell chamber and the bells are rung at many services.

Within the church is a rare Seven Sacrament Font which is in good condition.

We have heating, good lighting and a sound system all of which have been installed in recent years. The church fabric is in good order and the north aisle and chancel have been re roofed in the last 30 years.

In the 1980s a church room with kitchen and toilet was built onto the side of the church. In addition to regular church use it is hired out to craft groups.

Our well-kept churchyard has a conservation area and we are in liaison with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust to continue to manage it.

The Friends of St Peter's raises money for maintenance of the church building.



Trips up the tower to raise funds for repair



Church Room



# Kirstead

## St. Margaret's Church and the village

The parish of Kirstead derives from kirkja, Old Norse and has Viking influence. The village has no centre as such and has around 250 residents; it is surrounded by countryside.

Kirstead Church has elements that may date from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century but was extensively rebuilt in 1864 by H W Hayward when the thatched roof of the nave was replaced with pantiles and the chancel was added.

Kirstead Hall, a Grade 1 listed historical house and once a studio for the artist Edward Seago, is open for tours throughout the year and is also the home of Kirstead Antique Restoration. Despite being only small Kirstead Green is home to a rather lovely plant centre ('Homestead Nursery') perfect for stocking up the Vicarage garden. Kirstead also boasts close proximity to 'Old Hall Farm', where you can enjoy a hearty breakfast or lunch whilst being entertained by their goats and peacocks! As this is officially in Woodton you will find out more about it on the Woodton parish page.



Warm glow of the heating at Harvest

## The community

The supporters of Kirstead Church are not all from the village but come from further afield as a result of a strong connection to the church.

# Mundham with Seething

## The churches

Our churches are two miles south-east of Brooke and have been joined ecclesiastically since 1584.

**St Peter**, Mundham, is Grade 1 listed has a square tower and a magnificent Norman archway in the South Porch

**St. Margaret and St. Remegius**, Seething, also Grade 1 listed, has a round tower and thatched roof.

The churchyard is set in a meadow known as the church triangle. This is a medieval or post medieval ridge and furrow heritage site. The Wilding Seething group actively work with the Parish Council and Norfolk Wildlife Trust to manage the land.

## The communities

The population for Seething is around 400 and 150 for Mundham.

There is a very active “Friends of Seething Church” who hold events in the church including a Christmas Fayre.

The Village Hall, situated in Seething, is the focal point for both parishes, playing host to community lunches and the Seething Community Café which is held on the third Wednesday of most months. A quarterly newsletter can be found on the Village Hall website.

Seething has a village primary school which is shared with Mundham. Services for pupils are held at Christmas in Seething Church, with a Harvest Thanksgiving in Mundham Church.

There is also a very handy Post Office/Shop in Seething, a bowls club and a play park on Seething Playing field.

To the south of the parish, there is a thriving Flying Club (home of the Waveney Flying Group) on the site of a Second World War USAF airfield. The wartime control tower has been renovated and turned into a museum.



# Thwaite St Mary

## St Mary's Church and the village

Thwaite St Mary is our smallest parish, home to only about 75 residents. St Mary's Church dates back to the 11th century, has a thatched roof, a simple interior and seating for about sixty people. The Norman doorway is a particular feature.

Due to its rural location Thwaite is known for its dark skies and is home to an astronomical observatory which holds public events throughout the year.

## The community

We do not have a village hall; however, we encourage the use of our church for meetings and social events. We are fortunate to have the help and support of the majority of residents, whether they are church attendees or not, with cleaning, flower-arranging and churchyard maintenance.





# Hempnall Group

# Hempnall Group – Worship

In the Hempnall Group we have a solid liturgical tradition of both Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic worship, based upon Common Worship but encompassing a suite of other liturgical material, including Celtic and Iona services. Prior to vacancy our weekly Eucharists rotated round the eight churches, with a monthly Group Eucharist, and otherwise a mix of parish-based morning worship. Especially since the pandemic and while in vacancy there has been an increased emphasis on ‘whole-benefice’ services, wherever held, with ‘travelling’ congregations: however, we have still maintained parish-based provision, too, especially for festivals and occasions such as Mothering Sunday, Harvest Thanksgiving and Remembrance Sunday.

We have a strong history of collaborative ministry with the encouragement of lay involvement as lesson readers, intercessors, Lay Deacons etc. We are the ‘home benefice’ of a Licensed Lay Minister and two Authorised Worship Assistants (of whom one is in training to be an LLM). Three lay people (one LLM, one AWA and a Home Communion Assistant) take Home Communions to those in need.



Animal Service



Taizé service

There are currently 150 people on the Electoral Rolls and attendance at our services is typically around 25-30, rising to over 100 for special services.

We hold around 5 baptisms and weddings and 20 funerals each year.

# Hempnall Group – Community Engagement

The monthly *Village News* publication - compiled on behalf of the Joint Council by the Group Administrator, published online and emailed to all who request it (currently over 400) - is a popular resource, containing church and community news and various articles of general interest.

At Group and individual parish level we offer a wide range of events, some oriented to fund-raising (for external charities or for church funds) and others with more of a community focus, fulfilling an important social function,

Popular occasions include an annual village-wide Open Gardens weekend (Topcroft), a large annual booksale (Hardwick), regular ‘bacon butty’ mornings (Hempnall) and various craft fairs. One of our PCCs has run a ‘pop-up’ pub as a social occasion and fundraiser (Morningthorpe and Fritton) while another hosts a quarterly Dog Café in the church as a community event (Hardwick). We have a well-established walking group (of up to 20 people) which meets once a month for a Sunday afternoon stroll followed by tea.

We usually organise (more recently on Zoom) a series of Lent talks on topical issues (eg the environment) with interesting external speakers. These attract participants from across the Diocese. Within the Group we offer some Lent Lunches as opportunities to share a simple meal and time of reflection together.



Pancake Race



Launch Party for ‘Let’s walk’



# Hempnall Group – Welcoming Vistors

As well as keeping our churches open 24/7, the Hempnall Group has a long and successful tradition of making available informative and attractive visitor information.

Group publications currently available in our churches (and in several local cafes and other outlets) are:

- ‘*The Group*’ (1985) a collection of essays by Group members
- ‘*Beyond the Parish Pump*’ (2003), an evaluation of the Group
- ‘*Golden Harvest*’ (2013), a collection of essays by past and present clergy
- ‘*Hotchpotch*’ (2013) a miscellany
- ‘*The Parish Churches of the Hempnall Group*’ (2005), a comprehensive guide to the churches
- ‘*Let’s Walk*’ (2016) , ‘*Let’s Walk Again*’ (2018), and ‘*Let’s Walk Further* (2020J’, three popular walk books
- ‘*Meditative walks*’ (2019) (leaflet in each church depicting a walk round the interior)
- ‘*Prayer Calendar*’



Let's Walk



12 Circular walks in South Norfolk

Let's Walk Again

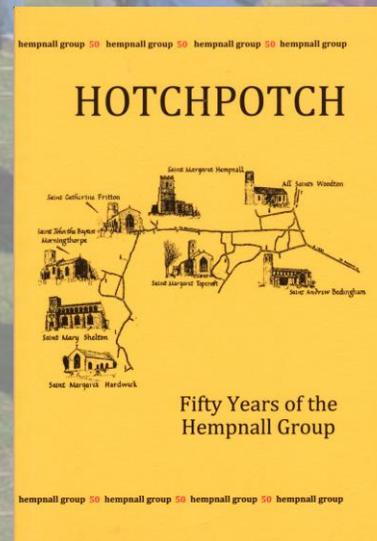


Circular walks in south Norfolk

Let's Walk Further

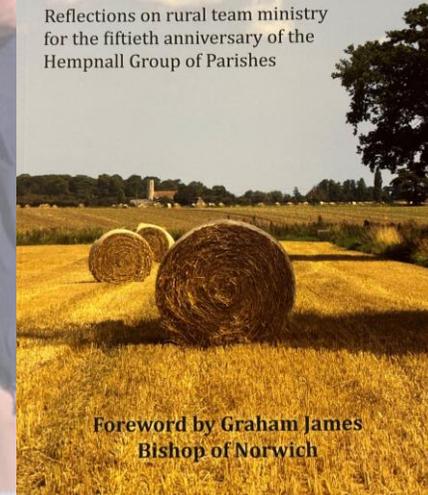


Circular walks in south Norfolk

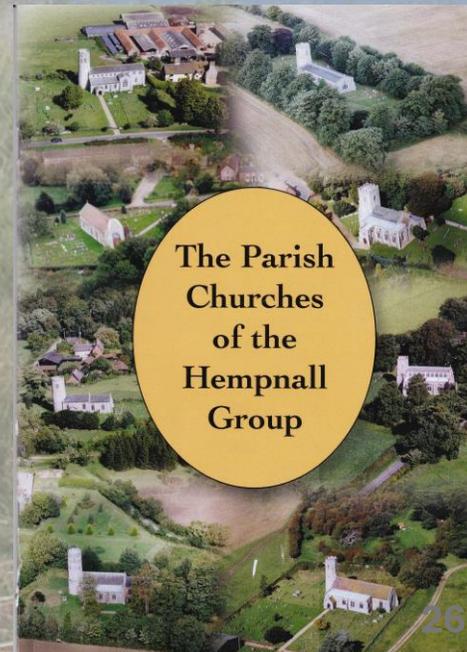


Golden Harvest

Reflections on rural team ministry for the fiftieth anniversary of the Hempnall Group of Parishes



Foreword by Graham James  
Bishop of Norwich



The Parish Churches of the Hempnall Group

# Hempnall Group – Governance and Finances

The Hempnall Group has been in its current form for 60 years, having been one of the first groups in the country. We are very proud of this heritage. Since its inception it has operated in a teamly fashion, recognising the role of each individual parish component but seeing the advantages of acting together. There is a strong sense of Group identity, with frequent Group worship, a monthly Group newsletter, emphasising the principle of a coherent whole.

Our governance arrangements reflect that approach. Having long had a Group Council as a co-ordinating body, we were one of the first benefices in the Diocese to take up the option under recently-revised church legislation to establish a legally-empowered Joint Council. Our ‘bespoke’ scheme assigns various benefice-wide tasks and responsibilities to that body, which is lay-chaired, while individual PCCs retain all legal responsibilities and resources concerning their particular churches. Each parish pays an agreed Group Quota, managed by the Group Treasurer, to cover expenditure in common, including our Hempnall Group magazine (*Village News*), other publications and the provision of pump-priming for new enterprises.

## Finances

<b>Benefice/Parish Share</b>	<b>£ Requested 2024</b>	<b>£ Paid 2024</b>
<b>Bedingham</b>	3,589	2,000
<b>Hempnall</b>	16,350	16,350
<b>Morningthorpe and Fritton</b>	5,423	5,423
<b>Shelton with Hardwick</b>	4,865	4,865
<b>Topcroft</b>	5,663	5,663
<b>Woodton</b>	3,988	4,001
<b>Benefice TOTAL</b>	<b>39,878</b>	<b>38,302</b>

# Bedingham

## St. Andrew's Church and the village

Bedingham is home to around 200 residents. It is a truly rural village with the benefit of lovely unspoilt countryside around.

St Andrew's Church, an interesting medieval building with a round tower, box pews and graffiti, is the focal point of the village.

Its light and roomy interior has been the venue for successful Flower Festivals and Art and Craft Exhibitions as well as hosting talks on round towers and graffiti.

## Community

The Friends of Saint Andrew's is an active group that supports the upkeep of the church building and works closely with the PCC.

The PCC regularly reviews pastoral needs and encourages good neighbourliness in this scattered village.

Nearby Woodton Village Hall is occasionally used for fundraising events.



# Hempnall

**St Margaret's Church** dating from 13th century rests in the heart of the village. It was re-ordered internally in the 1980s when the pews were removed, chairs introduced and a pamment floor laid with underfloor heating.

The wide-open area created is well suited to offer a venue for many activities and the opportunity for imaginative use of the space.

We are fortunate to have, in the base of the tower area, a well-equipped kitchen and an accessible toilet, and there is a meeting room above.

There is a recently updated sound system including a loop. We also have an attractive children's area.

The church benefits from a group of enthusiastic young parents who organise monthly Family and All Age Praise , an Easter egg hunt and a popular Christingle with community choir at Christmas.

John Wesley visited the village in 1759 and although the Methodist chapel is no longer in use the tradition is maintained by an occasional Methodist style service.

The closed churchyard has been surveyed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and includes an extensive conservation area and Commonwealth war graves.



# Morningthorpe and Fritton

## The churches and villages

The parish of Morningthorpe and Fritton consists of two rural villages, home to approximately 300 people. Farming will always be central to this community but there are also several small businesses here, as well as many young families.

The two churches are at the heart of the villages, as these beautiful landmarks are the only communal buildings available to residents.

**St. John the Baptist, Morningthorpe**, is a round tower church and dates to the Norman conquest. One of the highlights is its 15th century stone font.

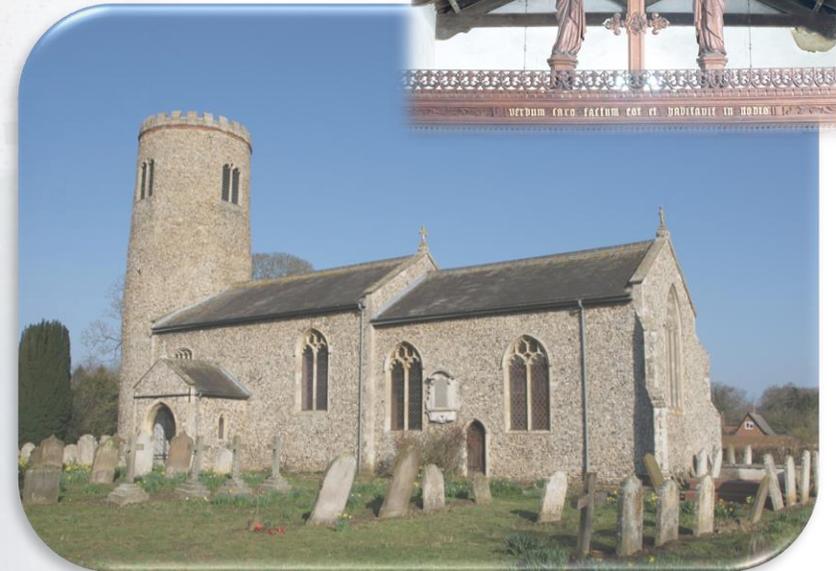
**St Catherine, Fritton**, is an equally special place, nestling between fields. Step inside, and you will see a magnificent 13th century wall painting of St. George slaying the dragon.

Christmas, Easter and harvest services are always well-attended at both churches.

Fritton Common is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, home to many different plants and animals, and Morningthorpe Common is enjoyed by dog walkers who also have access to a network of footpaths.

## Community

The villages have a great feeling of community, with an active bowls club and regular get-togethers in a privately owned barn for quiz nights and 'pop up pub' evenings.



# Shelton with Hardwick

## The churches and villages

Consisting of two small, neighbouring villages, the parish of Shelton with Hardwick forms the south-western corner of the Hempnall Group and is home to around 250 people.

Shelton is a scattered community spread in small clusters over a wide agricultural area, while Hardwick is a more concentrated settlement. There are two churches in the parish, both Grade 1 listed, about a mile apart.

**St Mary's Church**, Shelton is an outstanding building in the Perpendicular style and is generally regarded as one of the gems among Norfolk's churches, with an entry in 'England's Best Thousand Churches' by Simon Jenkins. It stands in an isolated position and has no electricity, heating or water.

**St Margaret's Church**, Hardwick is a contrast in size, style and location, being situated in the main street of its village. Features include an interesting 14th century St Christopher wall painting and a richly carved rood screen.

Although we have only a small Church Electoral Roll and PCC (and no Churchwardens in office for 16 years), all key functions are nevertheless covered by volunteers. A popular annual book sale in Hardwick Church attracts parishioners and visitors from a wide area. An annual animal service in Shelton Church and the innovation in 2024 of a Pop-Up Dog Café in Hardwick Church have proved popular missional initiatives.

## Community

The Village Hall for the parish is located in Hardwick and offers monthly coffee mornings and regular social events. The PCC has good relations with the Parish Council and Village Hall Committee and is contributing to a joint 'heritage event'.



# Topcroft

## St. Margaret's Church and the village

Topcroft is a rural parish with about 270 residents and 6 working farms.

The church is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from the centre of the village and the churchyard includes a conservation area.

Inside the church, pews have been removed from the south aisle and pampments laid enabling this area to be used flexibly. A sound system has been installed. An attractive extension on the north side houses a modern kitchen and toilet.

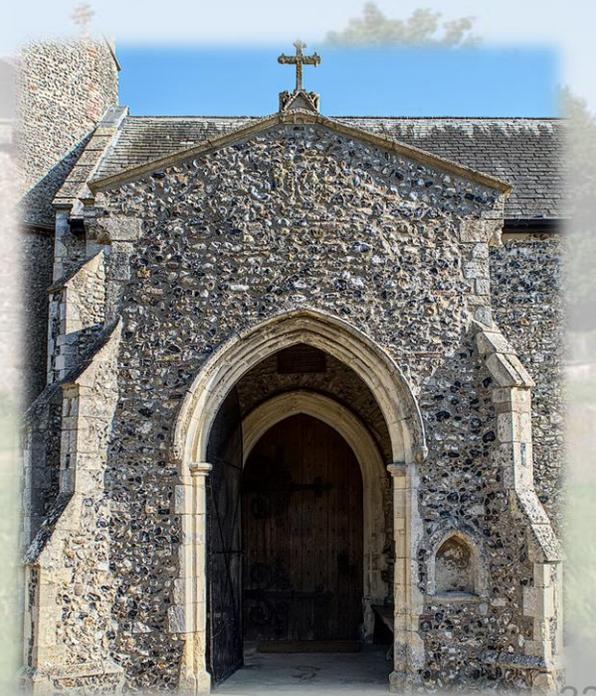
A pastoral team welcomes newcomers into the village and members visit those who are housebound or needing help.

The Remembrance Day service is attended by members of the USAAF from Lakenheath and followed by a short service for the fallen at the War Memorial in nearby Hardwick Airfield, concluding with a Poppy drop from an aeroplane. This Airfield was occupied by the 93rd Bomb Group during World War 2; it houses a small museum and has several vintage aircraft on site.

## Community

The church organises a number of popular events including Lent Lunches, Carol Singing, Open Gardens, Quizzes and Progressive Supper.

The Playing Field is home to a popular cricket club which encourages young people to take part and runs a flourishing junior team together with a Ladies and Men's teams. There is a play area for children. The Pavilion, situated beside the Playing Field, has a bar open to all on Friday evenings.



# Woodton

## All Saints' Church and the village

Woodton is a rural parish with around 500 residents including six families farming land in the village. Housing Development sites in the parish have been approved.

The church has an outstanding east window and 6 bells which are rung regularly.

The Primary School has good links with the church where it holds its Easter, Harvest and Christmas celebrations, as well as being involved in the Act of Remembrance. The playing field, adjacent to the school, has excellent facilities, including a football pitch for Woodton United Football Club.

## Community

The Village Hall runs regular events include a Sunday breakfast club, a Monday Afternoon Club, Ladies Together, Carpet Bowls and Whist. Adjacent to it is Raven's Den play area which is linked to Woodton Community Wood; this includes an area available for the Forest School initiative and nature walks for all abilities.

Woodton King's Head Freehouse is a registered Community Asset and an important facility in the heart of the village. Adjoining this popular local pub (which has a pool table and darts) is a well-reviewed Indian restaurant. A coffee morning is held every Tuesday morning.

Old Hall Farm and Café, recently set up by a local farming family, includes an excellent café serving food all day and sells raw milk, locally sourced meat, cheeses, wine, fruit and vegetables. A vineyard is developing on the site and as an added attraction for families there are animals to view.



# Contacts

We look forward to the arrival of our **new priest** and can assure you of a warm welcome and prayerful and practical support.

*Helpful links:*

The Brooke Benefice website can be found at <https://brooke.churchnet.co>

The Hempnall Group website can be found at <https://hempnallgroup.co.uk>

Both are updated regularly with service information, events and newsletters.