

The Wymersley Benefice of Cogenhoe and Great Houghton and Little Houghton with Brafield on the Green



St Peter's Cogenhoe

Sharing God's love and including all people in worship anywhere, anytime.



St Mary's Great Houghton

To make known the love of God in each home through our faith We aim to develop a vibrant community through prayer, education, worship and fellowship.



St Mary's Little Houghton.

Keeping the Church at the heart of village life



St Laurence, Brafield on the Green.

Encouraging the community to come and share God's Word.

Benefice Profile May 2023

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the Wymersley Benefice of Cogenhoe, Great Houghton and Little Houghton with Brafield on the Green – four very different villages united in the single purpose of spreading the Word of God, and supporting and encouraging our parishioners to be more thoughtful and caring neighbours.

Our hope is that this profile will give you an overall view of the Benefice – of what we are like, what we have to offer and our hopes for the future. We look forward to welcoming a new priest who will have the enthusiasm, energy and commitment to support us as we face challenges and opportunities in the days ahead.

Jean Grubb and Joy Hodge Churchwardens of Cogenhoe	Sarah Kelly on behalf of Great Houghton
Sohelia Back Churchwarden of Little Houghton	Mike Hamborg Churchwarden of Brafield on the Green

Benefice website : www.wymersleybenefice.org.uk

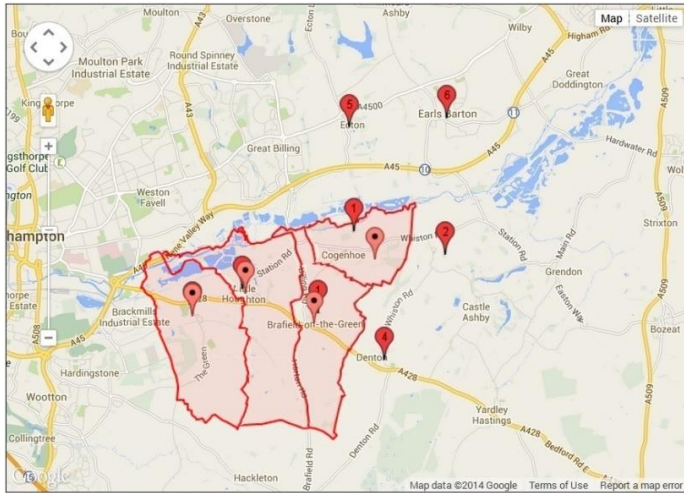
Contents

Welcome	2
Contents.....	2
Benefice and Surrounding Area	3
The Rectory	7
Vision and Mission.....	7
Future Direction	10
Church Buildings	11
Services	14
Support Available.....	16
Work among children and young people.....	16
Church Groups and Activities.....	17
Finance.....	17
Organisation.....	17
Person Specification.....	17
A position for you?.....	18

Benefice and Surrounding Area

The Benefice

The Benefice of Cogenhoe and Great Houghton and Little Houghton with Brafield on the Green was formed in 1997. The original Benefice of Little Houghton with Brafield on the Green began in 1686, thus making it one of the oldest in the country. Great Houghton was added in 1988. This is a well-established Benefice, the four churches having worked together for 26 years. We are, in the Deanery of Wellingborough, the Archdeaconry of Northampton and the Diocese of Peterborough. The Cathedral is approximately one hour's drive away.



We are four rural parishes, each with its own individual characteristics, lying to the SE of Northampton. All four parishes are in the West Northamptonshire Council area.

The map shows the four parishes, L-R: Great Houghton, Little Houghton, Brafield on the Green and Cogenhoe. Although Cogenhoe has the smallest area it is the highest population at 1474. Brafield has 652, Great Houghton 651 and Little Houghton 488. At the moment, the ethnic grouping is mainly white.

Northampton is the county town of Northamptonshire, with a population of over 246,000 people and still expanding. It lies between London and Birmingham at the 'cross-roads of England'. There is easy access by train and road to London, Birmingham, Birmingham International Airport and Milton Keynes.

Northampton and Wellingborough both have the major supermarkets. Doctors' surgeries at Denton, Earls Barton and Northampton provide medical services. Northampton has a large General Hospital with A&E. There is a "Village Hopper" bus run by Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council that provides transport into town and return several times a day.

The town offers a wide range of cultural, retail, leisure and employment opportunities. It is home to Northampton Saints rugby team, Northampton Town Football Club (the Cobblers), the Northants County Cricket team, the Royal & Derngate Theatres, the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery (including national shoe museum), the iconic 78 Derngate designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the University of Northampton. There are several places of historic interest reasonably close by - e.g. Althorp House, Castle Ashby House and Lamport Hall. Other nearby places of local interest include Silverstone Circuit and Towcester Racecourse.

Cogenhoe

The population of Cogenhoe is 1474 which covers all age groups. The church is on the edge of the older part of the village and there has been much ribbon development from the 1960's to present day. Infilling is still continuing. There are limited opportunities for employment in Cogenhoe.

Cogenhoe Primary School has a good reputation and attracts families from within and outside of the village. We do have links with the school (which is not a church school) although following Covid these have reduced and need to be re-established.

There is a pre-school playgroup held in the village hall, Monday to Friday, recently rated good by Ofsted. We have links with the pre-school through a member of the PCC and are keen to develop this relationship further. Pre-school attend the church for harvest service.

Within the village we have a shop with post office, the Royal Oak pub and restaurant village hall, sports & social, bowls, football and cricket clubs. The bowls and football clubs both have their own grounds and amenities. There are a defibrillator and emergency bleed equipment at the Village Hall

There are a garden centre, petrol station and restaurants nearby. Cogenhoe Mill Caravan Park, which is residential for 10 months of the year, is within walking distance of the church.

The [Parish Council](#) is sole trustee of the village hall which stands within a large playing field with a children's modern playground. They offer a variety of social groups for the more vulnerable villagers to combat loneliness and dementia. They also host a monthly rural cinema. Church members are well represented on the Parish Council and Village Hall committee.

The village cricket club plays here during the season and the football pitch is used by clubs from outside the village. There is a café in the village hall which is open Wednesday to Sunday.

The playing field is also used when the village comes together for celebratory functions, such as Platinum Jubilee, Picnic in the Park and Coronation celebrations.

The Parish Council also runs a self-funding (with grants from local and national authorities) community bus service to Northampton 5 times per day, Monday to Friday and 4 times on a Saturday, when it goes through to Wellingborough.

Great Houghton

Great Houghton is a large village on the eastern side of Northampton situated just south of the A428 Bedford Road. This forms one of only two approaches to the village – the other coming from the B526 Newport Pagnell Road. In modern times the village has become incorporated within the expanded Northampton Borough boundaries.

Like Little Houghton, the village was developed on high ground overlooking the Nene valley. Its dwellings were documented in the Domesday Book and research suggests settlements have been present on its site since Roman times.

The village presently has 282 houses, the majority of which are owner-occupied. Its population in 2021 census was 651 (107 aged <14 years; 366 aged 14-64 years; and 178 aged >64 years). The predominant ethnic grouping is white. In the current housing plans for Northampton 850 houses are to be built at the top of this village by 2030.

The older part of the village is situated in the area adjacent to the church with a number of listed buildings within the designated Conservation area.

There are no major industries or offices based within the village in 2023 although the village is close to the Brackmills industrial estate, which houses a number of multi-national companies including Barclaycard. The A428 road has been the site of development of a number of offices, restaurants and hotels in the last 30 years. In 2014, the old Cattle Market site adjacent to the village has been redeveloped for major warehousing. However, there is still an important local agricultural economy surrounding the village and its importance is reflected particularly at the time of Harvest Festival.

Like many villages, Great Houghton lost its Post Office and local store which closed about ten years ago.

Great Houghton has two public houses both situated within the older part of the village close to the Church. Both pubs have gardens and provide food for visitors. The village has an excellent Parish Hall that was built in 2003 as a result of a magnificent bequest from a villager and is

appropriately named the Parsons Memorial Hall. It sits on extensive grounds which boast a children's play area, exercise activities on its periphery, cricket and football pitches and tennis courts. It is run by a committee of local volunteers. Details of Church services and a full list of current activities at the Hall and is advertised in the Great Houghton Parish News and can be found on www.greathoughton.org.uk

A new addition to the village is Mower's Ark which is a Christian ministry based in the village High Street. It provides specialised, enriching and supportive activities for individuals with learning disabilities across Northamptonshire.

The Dexterity Dance School in what was the private junior school offers classical and modern dance.

The Diocesan office at Bouverie Court is within the Parish.

Little Houghton

Whilst Little Houghton is within easy reach of Northampton, the village itself is bypassed by the busy Northampton to Bedford A428 trunk road. It is set on high ground above the valley of the river Nene, and has a good collection of dated stone houses and cottages, mainly of local dark ironstone and buff-colour sandstone. The earliest house is believed to date from 1601.

The village is the smallest in the Benefice, with a population of 488. There are about 180 houses. In the early twentieth century the population tended to fluctuate, the earlier years being greater than today. Apart from the present tendency for smaller families, many of the cottages have been altered to create larger properties. A large proportion of the houses are owner-occupied, although there is some Housing Association property, and a number of the larger houses (mostly in the ownership of the Little Houghton Estate) are rented.

The older part of the village is a designated Conservation Area. A small development of around 20 houses and bungalows is about to be built in summer 2023.

There is a public house and restaurant 'The Four Pears.' The village hall (not church property) is managed by a committee and is hired by organisations, including the church, as required.

There is a beauty parlour and a business "Zinc" an IT company run by two villagers who employ people. The village shop and Post Office closed at the end of June 2022, but there is a lot of work happening in the background with the hope of opening a Community Shop and Post Office.

A small industrial estate at Clifford Hill (1m distant with an historic mound believed to have been a Motte and Bailey guarding the river crossing) provides a centre for a removals firm. There is little local employment.

A monthly Parish Magazine circulates in Little Houghton and Brafield. It is not a church magazine, although it carries news of the churches including details of services and forthcoming events.

The land surrounding the village is mostly owned by the Davidge-Usher Trust, and has largely been farmed by one family for the past eighty years.

There is a small play area, with swings and slides; the land is owned by the Parish Council and is managed by and fund-raised for by an enthusiastic committee.

The [Little Houghton Church of England Aided Primary School](#) has about a hundred pupils, with six class teachers, several teaching assistants, and administrative staff.

The first school was founded in the early seventeenth century, and has since provided continuous education for children of the village. The present building dates from 1967.

The Vicar is a Foundation Governor, and visits to lead Assembly or to give religious instruction. The PCC is entitled to appoint three Foundation Governors to the Board.



There is an active Association of Friends which supports the school in various ways, particularly in raising funds for specialist equipment and other needs.

The Ward and Smyth Educational Foundation (one of several village charities) also makes grants for specific purposes.

The School has catered for Great Houghton children since the school there closed in 1924 and also nowadays children from other local areas.



Brafield on the Green

We are a rural village with a population of approximately 650, and surrounded by mixed arable and pasture farming. Around two thirds of the 300 or so dwellings are owner occupied whilst the remainder is housing association accommodation with some private rental. There would seem to be a well-balanced mix of all ages and professionals, tradesmen and retirees.

Brafield has two shops, one being a butcher's shop which also provides groceries, alcohol, tobacco and newspapers. It also has a Post Office counter. The other is a petrol station and general store and has a car-washing service. There is also a long-established Funeral Director with three Chapels of Rest.

The Red Lion is the local pub and restaurant, and the Sports & Social Club is popular.

The village is fortunate to have The Sargeant Memorial Hall ("the Hall") which is used by the Church, local organisations, a Playgroup and various classes including yoga, fitness, a bowls club and dance. It is also hired out for private functions. The trustees are required to be communicant Christians and the incumbent has responsibility for their appointment.

The Alley Garden Play Area is run by the Parish Council. Next to the play area are allotments which are fully in use and owned by a village Charity.

There are four local Charities connected to St. Laurence's Church, in which we hope the new Priest will take an interest.

Sadly, we have no involvement in a local school since our own village school closed almost thirty years ago. The catchment area for our primary-aged children is Denton, a neighbouring village just outside the Benefice. The catchment area for secondary school children is Wollaston, some 8 miles away. A free school bus is available to transport the youngsters.

We welcome children to our Eucharist and Family Services, and provide instruments, toys, a play mat, books, colouring books and crayons for their amusement. Our Reader, in leading the Family Service, always involves the children in activities relevant to the chosen topic. We would very much like the new incumbent to encourage children and younger people of the village to become part of our Church community.

The Nursery next to our Church participates in our festival at Christmas by decorating a tree. We continue to encourage their involvement in church activities and have provided them with access to the church at any time to give them a safe place in case of emergency.

The Playgroup held in the Hall also joins in with our Christmas festival.

The Rectory

The stone Rectory is in Cogenhoe, adjacent to St Peter's Church. It was built in the late 1980s to a very high standard. It is an excellent family home with four bedrooms, a refurbished modern kitchen and large lounge and dining room. There is a double garage and ample parking at the front.



The front door opens into a small lobby with separate doors to the home and study, so that visitors do not need to go into the home.

There is a large mature garden with a doorway into a spinney.

The Rectory is served by BT superfast fibre broadband.

The house is in the catchment area of [Cogenhoe Primary School](#). Little Houghton has a [Church of England primary school](#).

Most of the village children attend [Wollaston School](#) for their secondary education, although a number of local children attend [Bishop Stopford Church of England School](#) in Kettering, [Northampton School for Boys](#) or [Northampton School for Girls](#). Caroline Chisholm and Abbeyfield School are other secondary schools.

Fee-paying Wellingborough School caters for children from pre-school to 6th form and Northampton High School for girls from 11.

The area is served by GP practices based in Denton and Earls Barton (both of which have in-house dispensaries) and several practices in Northampton. The nearest hospital is Northampton General (which also provides A&E services).



Vision and Mission

None of the churches within the Benefice has passed any resolutions under the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993.

Cogenhoe

Sharing God's love and including all people in worship anywhere, anytime.

Our Vision

We are a modern catholic parish, enjoying a variety of liturgy and music. Our family worship is lively and informal. Vestments are worn for the parish Eucharist where common worship is used, led by the organ and choir.

Our vision is to continue to build on and develop a greater presence within the wider community and to make people of all ages feel included and able to worship in a way they feel comfortable. We hope to achieve this through active outreach to all.

The right candidate would be set within the modern catholic tradition: a good preacher and teacher with energy and enthusiasm, able to respond to the needs of our community. We have an aging congregation and are keen to encourage more young people and families to attend regularly.

Great Houghton

Mission Statement of St Mary BV, Great Houghton:

To make known the love of God in each home through our faith We aim to develop a vibrant community through prayer, education, worship and fellowship.

Our vision and mission

To develop and deepen the faith within our present congregation and encourage greater participation from others within the village to join us in worship, evangelical discussion, and social interaction.

To foster a sense of welcome, pride and responsibility towards the Church within our community.

To understand and to better respond to the spiritual needs of our fellow villagers.

To expand the cadre of core members participating in the activities of the church including duty rotas, participation in church services, membership of church committees and positions and aid in local social events.

To enhance the pastoral reputation of the Church within the village as a result of the work of our clergy and lay members, particularly with respect to the elderly and infirm.

To continue our support of those involved with providing religious education to our local youngsters particularly via the Puppet Praise services and with respect to Messy Church. Encouragement is given to people of all ages to put themselves forward for Confirmation.

To maintain and increase our involvement and links with the school in Little Houghton.

To promote the planned-giving campaign.

Little Houghton

Our pattern of Sunday services reflects our desire to connect with people of all ages, whilst acknowledging the need to provide for those who are more conservative in their preferred type of worship.

The parish might perhaps best be described as being of *moderate tradition*, with the use of vestments, Prayer Book early Holy Communion service and Evensong, and generally a rather more formal kind of worship. An exception is the monthly Family Service, which usually takes on an informal style, with an increasing contribution by young people.

Our Vision

- to look at ways of strengthening and deepening the faith of all who work to achieve this vision, and through them to encourage others
- to develop our contact with the younger families, and our ministry among children and young adults
- to increase the church involvement with the village School
- to set a pattern for encouraging Confirmation, to be more aware of likely or eligible candidates, and review the working of the scheme to admit to Holy Communion before Confirmation
- to be more active in our support for the elderly and the housebound, particularly in visiting

- to continue to develop our planned-giving campaign
- to strengthen our small 'team' of lay people who work for the church

There are many opportunities waiting to be developed, to the benefit of both church and parish. Among them

- to seek out people who are able, and willing to train for the different aspects of Lay Ministry. eg. in leading worship, as pastoral and Eucharistic assistants and, hopefully, as Lay Readers.
- to set up a network of people who not only visit as needed, but also 'hear' what is happening, particularly among the sick
- to bring more people, of all ages, into committed and regular worship
- to press forward with the planned-giving scheme, in order to free members of the Church Council of the burden of having to devote so much energy to fund-raising, thus enabling them to give time to worship, pastoral and evangelistic matters. The social and often pastoral value of fund-raising activities is, however, recognized, particularly in a small village community.

We believe that this list of 'opportunities' is widely embracing, and that with the support and experience of an enthusiastic and energetic priest, we shall be able to plan a strategy, and then gradually work to achieve it.

Brafield on the Green

Our Mission Statement for the Church of St. Laurence is:

"Encouraging the community to come and share God's Word"

St Laurence's is of the Modern Catholic tradition of the Anglican Church with the wearing of vestments for the celebration of the Eucharist.

We currently have 18 parishioners on our Electoral Roll and our average Sunday attendance is 12, with an average of 12 communicants.

Village festivals are very well attended by the wider community, as are local christenings, weddings and funerals.

Each year, apart from two years affected by the Covid pandemic, we pay our Parish Share in full, as funds become available.

We have a willing and very experienced organist and choir leader, who would like to resurrect the Junior Choir, but there is currently a lack of youngsters keen to join. We also hope to encourage more singers into our Adult Choir. We shall continue to promote our Parish Lunches, Breakfasts and Festivals, to try to attract new members of the Parish into the family of the Church.

We would hope to strengthen the pastoral care from Baptism to Burial within the community.

We would welcome guidance in reaching the wider community and look forward to supporting and working with our new incumbent to fulfil our mission

Future Direction

Cogenhoe

We are continually working on increasing the congregation and bringing new people into the church while still meeting the needs of our existing congregation.

Our Social and Entertainment committee work hard organising events to include the whole community, i.e. quiz nights, suppers, concerts.

The church hall has recently been out of use, see the buildings section below. Meanwhile, the Village Hall and Sports and Social Club welcome us into their venues which puts church events at the centre of the village, attracting some people who would not normally attend such events.

Great Houghton

Like many parishes, the average age of our congregation gradually increases and the numbers attending services has not significantly increased. There remains an urgent need to engage young people and families with our church and re-invigorate our local Anglican community. The monthly Family Service and Puppet Praise remain the most popular services within the village and active encouragement is given for younger congregants to play an active part.

The combination of the nationwide move of the Church to develop larger Benefices and the geographical positioning of Great Houghton as the furthest outpost from our Rectory has significantly reduced the presence of the church within the village. This cannot be fully compensated for by lay activity particularly when many are out of the village during the working day. The result has been a reduction of the perceived central position of the church within the local community. In 2022 it was decided to place the village church into the Church Closure Process.

Little Houghton

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- to set up a network of people who not only visit as needed, but also 'hear' what is happening, particularly among the sick
- to bring more people, of all ages, into committed and regular worship
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We believe that this short list of 'opportunities' is widely embracing, and that with the support and experience of an enthusiastic and energetic priest, we shall be able to plan a strategy, and then gradually work to achieve it.

Brafield on the Green

Our aim is to encourage more young families to join in our Christian worship, as many members of the congregation are of a senior age. Our annual Flower Festival and Christmas Tree Festival are held in Church and are supported by many of those on the periphery of the Church family. A Horticultural Show has been a long-standing tradition in the village, but we are currently struggling to find judges. We would hope to revive this popular event in future years.

We hold a Harvest Supper as a way of pulling together the wider community, encouraging fellowship whilst raising much needed funds.

Since removing the pews from the west end of the Church, we have been able to make good use of the increased space for outreach projects. We hold monthly Parish Lunches from the Spring to late Autumn, and prior to the Covid pandemic started a monthly Saturday morning breakfast which we hope to restart during this year.

We look forward to leadership and guidance in the promoting of our Church family.

Church Buildings

Cogenhoe

The oldest part of St Peter's Church dates from the 13th Century. The church is Grade II* listed.



The effigy of Sir Nicholas de Cogenhoe, Crusader Knight and builder of the original church, is in the nave. The building was extensively restored in 1869–70, when the north chapel, which had been long demolished, was rebuilt on its old foundations. This chapel is now the vestry. The nave and aisles have metal roofing protected by an alarm system.

The interior was reordered in 2009 to provide an open nave with movable seating. We can accommodate about 120 seated.

We have an altar in the nave and a smaller one in the chancel which is used for some smaller services.

The pipe organ was found to be beyond economic repair and we now have a modern electronic instrument. The tower has six bells which are rung regularly for

services and weekly practices.

The Churchyard is well maintained by volunteers and is still open for burials.

St Peter's owns the Parish Centre, providing two halls with kitchen and toilet facilities. We await the report of a survey on the condition of the building, which has been closed since the pandemic.



Great Houghton

The first known village Church was established by the Anglo Saxons in the early 13th century and stood on the site occupied by the present Church until the mid-1700s. The first recorded priest is Roger de Houghton in 1230. It saw many changes in the county during this time and was witness to all the political trends of the times, including those of King Henry VIII, all of which would have affected life in the village. The present Church was built in the mid-18th century.

The rebuilt church is almost certainly on the same site as the original - the spiral staircase and lower portion of the bell tower retain the



old stone and are much older than the rest of the building.

The rebuilding was carried out in the Italianate style fashionable at that time. By 1780 repairs were needed to the roof, walls, bells and windows. In 1842 a gallery was installed at a cost of £48, and four years later a new font was installed.



In 1878 further restoration work took place, and the windows were divided into two lights. The gallery was removed, the lower arch opened, the south porch added and the interior re-seated. The stained glass window in the north wall is likely to have been added at this time. The window in the south wall is a much more recent addition; being commissioned by the Preparatory School in 1977 to celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee and the school's first Quarter-century.

In 1967 major structural faults were discovered in the spire. Repairs to this and other work totalling around £5,000 were funded mainly from within the village, which, at that time, still only had around 350 occupants. Further extensive remedial work to the roof to remedy beetle infestation and other problems of building decay has recently been completed.

Restoration of the Northwest and Southwest windows of the Nave and the vestry window were completed in 1997 and the clock was converted to an automatic electric winding mechanism.

Some of the pews have been removed and others repositioned to create a meeting area where the congregation can enjoy refreshments after the service. The building of an extension to provide kitchen and toilet facilities was completed in 2015.

Little Houghton

The Domesday Book does not record a church in Little Houghton, but there is evidence that one was founded by William de Hohtone in around AD1100. No traces of the original building, probably of wood, remain.

Of the present church, the south door and the font are thought to date from about AD1200. It has a Grade II* listing. The church occupies a prominent position in the centre of the village.

The arcade is considered to be an unusual and special feature of the tower, the whole of which underwent a complete restoration in 2010 at a cost of some £200,000. The original tower, of



three storeys dating from c1225, is of fine proportion with an upper arcade, originally with openings, on each face. It is likely that the openings were filled in, creating a 'blind' arcade, when the fourth, belfry, storey with parapet and intricately decorated limestone frieze, was added in about 1425. The tower arch, heavily restored during the Victorian rebuilding, and the chancel arch together with a smaller arch in the south wall of the chancel, are the only other remaining parts of the thirteenth century work. The only early

furnishings to survive are three misericord seats in the sanctuary; they have heads of men and monsters as arm-pieces.

The church was substantially rebuilt in the neo-Gothic style in 1873-74, when the nave was heightened, with clerestory, and a north bay added. Reporting on the state of the pre-1873 church, the retained architect commented that "seldom had it been his lot to visit an old church

that had been so ruthlessly mal-treated.”

There is some fine stained glass mainly dating from the latter part of the nineteenth century, the three light east window being by Clayton & Bell, c1873. A more recent addition was the window above the altar in the south aisle by Heaton, Butler and Bayne, and formerly in the chapel of the King’s School, Ely Cathedral.

The tower contains five bells the earliest dating from 1624, and the ingenious oak bell-frame set diagonally in the bell chamber window recesses is dated 27 March 1637; such frames are now somewhat rare.

In 2000, the church was able to acquire a William Hill organ of 1846 from a redundant church in Birmingham, to replace the earlier Bevington. It is a modest organ but an early example of William Hill’s work, and is listed by the British Institute of Organ Studies as being of importance to the national heritage. It is situated at the east end of the north aisle.



In 1999-2000 an extension was built to provide kitchen and toilet facilities with lobby and a new door to the north side of the churchyard.

There are some 250 sittings, with space for a large number of chairs.

The churchyard is still open for burials.

Brafield on the Green

The Parish Church of St. Laurence is situated on the north side of Brafield on the Green and dominates the skyline as one approaches the village. Parts of the Church, which is Grade II* listed, date back approximately 800 years, however, major changes were made in Victorian times. Today, we have a pleasing building, exceptionally well maintained, with gas central heating.



In 2011, a glass etched screen was fitted, opening up a view across the Church upon entering the building. It was paid for mainly by a donation. The screen depicts the Church and the village pond. On the nearby column may be found a serpent and a catlike animal, whilst heads look out from the corners. This is said to represent the Garden of Eden.

The wrought iron Vestry gates have been designed to represent St. Laurence’s gridiron.

There are six bells which are rung regularly for Sunday services and weddings, and on practice nights.

There are several stained glass windows. Above the High Altar and in the Chancel they are decorated in the grisaille style. The east end wall carries an embossed design, in deep red and antique white.

The Lady Chapel is carved oak panelled, depicting scenes from the life of Our Lady. The window above the Altar depicts the Annunciation. On the north wall there is an Aumbry, and the window above shows the Adoration of the Magi.

An extension was added in 1997, to accommodate a small kitchen and toilet, in the west corner of the Church.

The lighting system was completely renewed in 2010, with spotlights





and uplighters to enhance the beauty of the building.

The last Quinquennial inspection took place in September 2021. There were no major problems identified.

A complete overhaul of the organ, which dates from 1844, was carried out around 8 years ago. We have been complimented on its fine quality and are grateful to a local trust for funding the scheme and covering any future repairs. We are confident that no major work will be needed for the next 40 years.

We have created a room above the vestry which could be used as a meeting area or a children’s venue. The previous iron ladder has been replaced with a wooden staircase, giving easier access to the tower.

We have an open Churchyard for villagers, and a yearly parish collection helps with its upkeep. We employ the services of a contractor for general grass cutting. We also have a parishioner who uses a hand mower for the more noticeable areas and keeps the paths tidy. A

modest honorarium is made for this work.

Services

Our four churches hold a range of services from Eucharist (Book of Common Prayer) through a sung Eucharist to family-friendly services in which the young members play a larger role. Family services are sometimes led by a Reader.

Music

We mainly use “Complete Anglican hymns old and new” supplemented by the Iona Abbey music book and newer hymns as sheet music.

Monthly Service Structure

All services are listed on the Benefice website www.wymersleybenefice.org.uk

	Brafield on the Green	Great Houghton	Little Houghton	Cogenhoe
	9.00	9.30	11.00	11.00
First Sunday	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion
Second Sunday	Sung Eucharist	Puppet Praise	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer
Third Sunday	All Age Worship	Holy Communion	All Age Worship	Family Communion
Fourth Sunday	Prayer Book Communion	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	All Age Worship
Fifth Sunday	10:00 Benefice Communion, see calendar for location			

For the past twelve months the Benefice has been running a trial of having a set time for services in the four churches. It is generally felt that having an established time for services in each church is desirable to avoid confusion. However, we have found that the early start does not suit all members of the congregation in Brafield and 9am is probably not an ideal time to welcome new people into the Church.

Fifth Sundays and festivals are celebrated throughout the Benefice on a rota basis to give equal opportunities for each parish to celebrate these special times. Some feel that having a shared service on only four Sundays during the year allows us limited opportunities to meet with members of the other Churches in the Benefice. It also fragments the choir and ringers.

Lay people read the lessons, lead intercessions and welcome people into church. Each church holds its own Harvest Festival and Supper. The Cogenhoe Scouts, Cubs and Beavers attend on Remembrance Sunday and St George's Day. Little Houghton school attend regularly for end of term services.

Cogenhoe holds a December outdoor carol service in the centre of the village followed by mulled wine and mince pies in the village hall.

Christingle services are held in December (Cogenhoe and the Houghtons) with a Christmas Tree Carol Service in Brafield.

Coffee is provided after the main Sunday services to encourage people to stay and chat.

Baptisms are usually held during Family Worship and the families are visited beforehand by the priest or reader.

Weddings and funerals are usually the responsibility of the Priest and the couples to be married are seen on a number of occasions beforehand. Support is given after funerals as needed.

Average Sunday Attendance

Service	Children & Youth (0 - 16 yrs)	Adults	Totals
Cogenhoe 11am All-age	1	16	17
Cogenhoe 11am Eucharist	1	30	31
Cogenhoe 11am Morning Prayer	0	19	19
Great Houghton 9.30 Puppet Praise	6	11	17
Great Houghton 9.30 Eucharist	1	8	9
Great Houghton 9.30 Morning Prayer	0	5	5
Little Houghton 11.00 All age/Morning Prayer	2	17	19
Little Houghton 11.00 Eucharist	1	22	23
Brafield 9am Family Communion	0	14	14
Brafield 9am Family Service	0	10	10

Support Available

We are fortunate to have an assistant priest who works alongside our incumbent and leads some of our services. She has also established the regular “puppet praise” service at Great Houghton and an online chat group aimed specifically at younger members.

The benefice has several Eucharistic assistants. Lay members sometimes lead family and morning prayer services.



We are thankful that we have a regular organist and choir master who leads our small choir. He is funded by the PCCs. Pre-Covid our choir took part in the Peterborough Diocesan Choral Festival.

Little Houghton has a band playing for services once or twice a month.

Cogenhoe and Brafield each have a Verger who prepares for and attends weddings, baptisms and funerals, as well as carrying out administrative duties and a Sacristan who maintains church linen and prepares for services.

Cogenhoe and Brafield have a band of bell ringers who ring for services and practice on Monday (Cogenhoe) and Wednesday (Brafield) evenings.

The Benefice has paid for Clergy and Lay training.

Our churches have video projectors, used mainly for family worship services.

Work among children and young people

There are children’s corners in the churches with books, toys and colouring materials.

Once a month each church holds an all age worship service. In Great Houghton this is Puppet Praise, led by young puppeteers. We have a member who has completed the Certificate in Children’s Ministry training who runs family worship and puppet praise. On Good Friday a benefice activity (messy-church style) and walk is held.



In the summer of 2022, Cogenhoe had a drop-in children’s activity day which was well supported: this will be repeated.

Efforts continue to encourage more children and young people to take part in the monthly Family service, and several families with very small children have joined the congregation, albeit not yet on a regular basis. There were other activities pre-Covid which were affected by the loss of two key helpers who moved away. During lock-down about 40 activity bags for main festivals were delivered to children who had previously attended events and others on request.

For the past year we have held Wymersley Wild Church, a Sunday afternoon outdoor service at various sites in the benefice. This has attracted families who are not regular churchgoers.

Church Groups and Activities

Lent and Advent courses are held.

When there are candidates, we have Confirmation classes.

Cogenhoe has a flourishing Ladies Fellowship that meet monthly in the church with a varied programme of speakers and activities. During the colder winter months, they meet in the Village Hall.

Two Home Groups were established in the Benefice prior to the Covid pandemic and whilst these were put on hold during lockdown they have now resumed. An additional on-line Bible study group continues to meet weekly.

Pastoral care is provided, including home communion and hospital visits. Members of the congregation also do pastoral visiting on behalf of the church.

Little Houghton holds a monthly midday prayer service, much appreciated by the mainly older people who attend. Numbers average 25, sometimes more, although there is an upper limit of about 30 for catering purposes.

Brafield has a 'Knit & Natter' group which meets fortnightly in the Hall.

We support the annual National Historic Church Trust – Stride and Ride event.

Finance

Each Church has its own treasurer and there is also a Benefice account to which each church contributes. This is managed by a Benefice Treasurer.

Clergy Expenses are paid in full from the Benefice account; this has also paid for training, sheet music and music licensing.

The Benefice has only a small reserve as the level of contributions is reviewed annually.

Each church PCC is responsible for its own budgeting.

Organisation

The churchwardens from the benefice meet on a regular basis, under the chairmanship of the Rector to discuss benefice finance and events. Each church contributes equally to a benefice account to cover the clergy expenses etc. Each church has its own PCC, with formal meetings held at least quarterly and other meetings as required.

The Benefice uses 'I Know Church' software to manage email communication.

Person Specification

As a Benefice we are looking forward to welcoming a new parish Priest who has the vision, energy and enthusiasm to lead us as we respond to all opportunities to grow the presence of our churches and reach out further into our local communities. We seek an enthusiastic, motivated Priest to lead us in a variety of worship, celebrating our distinctions while inspiring us all to reach out into our villages.

The successful candidate should be a confident spiritual leader with a sincere faith, promoting the teachings of Our Lord through inspirational preaching and prayer, leading by example.

We seek a leader who is friendly and approachable and able to connect with people of all ages and backgrounds. He or she should have the skills energy and experience to further existing, and develop new, outreach links with local groups including schools, youth groups and the elderly; preferably with previous parish experience, although this is not essential.

We would like someone who supports and encourages lay members to train for roles in ministry and leadership: innovative while not losing sight of traditional values in worship and music, is a good listener and guide who will work with us to shape and implement the changes needed to enable us to achieve our vision.

Our Priest would be expected to provide pastoral care: visit the sick and housebound, celebrate home communions and have good counselling skills and empathy.

Good communication and IT skills are necessary. You should be happy to work with a team and willing to delegate.

A good sense of humour would be welcome!

Are you a leader who will further God's work in our Benefice?

A position for you?



We stand together at the beginning of a new chapter in our own journey. Like the disciples, we must listen to the voice of the risen Christ to tell us the way forward.

If you feel that God is calling you to apply for this vacancy, please contact:

Cheryl Cullen, the Archdeacon of Northampton's secretary

E-mail: pa.archdeacons@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

You will find further information about us on the Benefice website

www.wymersleybenefice.org.uk.

We would welcome informal visits from interested candidates.