

THE BENEFICE OF WHEATLEY  
ALBURY WITH TIDDINGTON, HOLTON,  
WATERPERRY AND WATERSTOCK

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DIOCESE OF OXFORD  
ASTON & CUDDSDON DEANERY



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## 1. FOREWORD BY THE BISHOP OF DORCHESTER

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Dear potential applicants,

I am delighted that you are reading this profile and encourage you to pray about whether this position might be the role to which God is now calling you.

The people of this Benefice are praying for an open, energetic, caring and outward looking priest to come and join in all that is currently happening, as well as with the opportunities there are. While this position is for the benefice Rector, the person appointed will be mostly focussed on mission and ministry to the village of Wheatley. St Mary's Wheatley has certainly not stood still during the vacancy: the re-ordering of the building has been completed and is leading to greater engagement with the community. There is a new Junior Choir project and potential for new groups and activities, including those outdoors.

They have much to offer. There is a committed group of people with whom to work and a desire to free the priest from administration to enable a focus on spiritual matters and reaching out to the community, including the new housing. You will find a friendly deanery with supportive colleagues. Our episcopal area and diocese are in good heart, expectant for all that God will do and thankful for all that God is doing.

Please pray about whether you might be the right minister to join us. If you decide to apply, I would be delighted to receive your application for this key position and look forward to the possibility of welcoming you as a potential colleague and partner in the Gospel.



With every blessing,

*Gavin Dorchester*

THE RT REVD GAVIN COLLINS,  
BISHOP OF DORCHESTER

# 2. Introduction

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## 2.1 THE BENEFICE

Within the Wheatley Benefice, the cluster of Albury consists of four parishes which are cared for by a House for Duty priest.

Relations between the parishes have been good, with the vicar of St Mary's and the Duty Priest occasionally swapping roles for services. Whilst it is possible to make changes to the current setup, the congregation and PCCs of all the Parishes are keen for it to continue.

The Church of St Mary the Virgin in Wheatley is the largest in the Benefice and is a lively and welcoming parish with a rich history and an active community life.



*St. Mary's Church Wheatley*

**Further details about these smaller parishes may be found in Appendix 3.**



**Albury with Tiddington (St Helen)**  
3 services per month; regular congregation around 10;  
population a little under 1000



**Holton (St Bartholomew)**  
2 services per month; regular congregation around 10;  
population around 400, soon to be increased by around  
500 houses



**Waterperry (St Mary the Virgin)**  
2 services per month; regular congregation 3-6;  
population around 120



**Waterstock (St Leonard)**  
2 services per month; regular congregation 8-10;  
population around 60

# 2. Introduction

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## 2.2 MISSION AND VISION AT ST. MARY'S

As the centre of Christian faith and compassion in Wheatley, our mission is to share God's love, serve our community and grow in faith together. We are working to make St Mary's an even more welcoming place for every member of the village, especially those who need our help most.

Located in the picturesque village of Wheatley, Oxfordshire, our newly refurbished church is a place of spiritual nourishment, community engagement, and historical significance. St Mary's is the largest parish in a Benefice of five parishes and has remarkably strong ecumenical links with other Churches in the village.

Our vision is to create an inclusive and supportive environment where all people can encounter God's presence, deepen their faith, and contribute to the life of the church and the wider community. We see evidence of God's presence in so many parts of our village life and our collective desire is to seek deeper community engagement in the many sacred and secular activities that take place every week.



**To quote J.V.Taylor (The Go-Between God, The Holy Spirit, and Christian Mission):**

**'The gift of the Holy Spirit in the fellowship of the church first enables Christians to be. Being, doing, and speaking cannot in practice be disentangled, but if we put our primary emphasis on preaching or on serving we erect a functional barrier between ourselves and our fellow humans, casting ourselves in a different role from the rest of men...The mission of the church, therefore, is to live the ordinary life in the extraordinary awareness of the other and self-sacrifice for the other which the Spirit gives'.**

The recently completed refurbishment heralds an increasingly outward-looking policy aimed at helping everyone in this diverse community feel more welcome. In addition to its role as a place of worship, St Mary's Church is thus becoming a centre for social welfare, the arts, and the multitude of activities that take place in this busy and thriving village.

## 2.3 Incumbent Profile ---



Whilst the position is for the incumbent of the whole Benefice, their responsibility is primarily for the village of Wheatley. (See Section 2.1 above.)

### We are looking for a vicar who:

- *will embrace our mission to minister to the whole community.*
- *will communicate the Christian faith in a relevant and thought-provoking manner.*
- *will make pastoral care an important concern.*
- *is inclusive and will embrace the diverse churchmanship of this village parish.*
- *is happy to continue to lead the parish on its LLF journey.*
- *will work effectively with our local schools and encourage families and young people.*

### 3. The Vicarage

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Above the church in Wheatley is a large vicarage with 4 bedrooms, 3 reception rooms, a separate parish office/study, and a good-sized but manageable garden. We have a letter from the DAC with provisional plans for an eco-retrofit and refurbishment to include full insulation, a heat pump, and solar panels. The lower part of the current garden is to be fenced off from the vicarage and become a church facility.



*Front view*



*Rear view seen from the church cemetery*

# 4. Worship

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## 4.1 Services

Worship at St Mary's is primarily Eucharistic. We enjoy a relaxed formality with liturgical services both old and new, and are open to the creative use of liturgy. We embrace the variety offered by Common Worship for both the Eucharist and a Service of the Word, and the congregation enjoys participating in the liturgy. Average attendance on a normal Sunday is between 50 and 60 in total.

As a village church rather than a gathered congregation, we represent the breadth of the Church of England. An 8am Prayer Book Holy Communion thus sits alongside our 10am Common Worship Parish Eucharist. Our monthly all-age service, *Parish Praise*, is informal but still distinctively Anglican, and our new family-friendly evening service retains the beauty and order of Choral Evensong while being accessible to younger worshippers.



*Christmas Eve  
Crib Service*



The observation of major festivals reflects our traditional Anglican approach, alongside sharing with our fellow Christians of other denominations. **Further details of these festivals may be found in Appendix 2.**

Our online services are always live in Zoom and, to a greater or lesser extent, interactive. As a result, we do not make recordings. Our fully interactive, liturgical services during the lockdowns were widely appreciated and we continue to hold Morning Prayer in Zoom daily.

## 4.2 Music

At St Mary's, singing praises to God is central to our worship. Our music is live and unamplified, and we embrace all musical styles from plainsong to modern worship songs. Our enthusiastic and talented Director of Music meets regularly with the Vicar to choose the hymns together well in advance, and to discuss the musical requirements of special services, which always feature the choir.

# Worship

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## Music

The choral programme is ambitious for a village church and the standard of music is remarkably high, drawing in new congregation members. Although the regular choir is small, singers from other churches and none are always keen to join us for special events.

The choir always sings an anthem at our main Sunday morning service and leads the singing of the congregation with accompaniment from the organ or instrumentalists as appropriate.

Our new evening service, Praise, is a family-friendly Choral Evensong, specifically designed for our new and embryonic Junior Choir who rehearse on Sunday afternoons. The service mostly uses Common Worship texts, although we plan to include occasional BCP services as well, to ensure that the choristers have a breadth of experience. Choristers will be joined by the regular choir for Carol Services and other special events.



*Wheatley Community Choir*

# 5. Discipleship & Youth Work —

## 5.1 Wheatley Primary School

We have strong links with our Church of England Primary School. The previous vicar was an active member of the Governing Body and took weekly assemblies for KS1 and KS2 pupils. The assemblies are being covered by our Licensed Lay Minister during the Interregnum. The school regularly visits for Harvest, Christmas, and Easter celebrations, and we are planning further visits to the newly reordered building.



## 5.2 Wheatley Park School

St Mary's has been leading a small but thriving lunchtime group, Xplore, for 14 years. The focus of the group varies according to the students involved. This year, with keen and committed Christians, we have studied the whole of Matthew's Gospel. In previous years we have used the Youth Emmaus course and various Scripture Union resources designed more for seekers.

## 5.3 Pulse

St Mary's supports an ecumenical youth group on Sunday evenings, based at the URC.



## 5.4 Groups for Adults

A small group meets daily on Zoom for Morning Prayer, providing support and encouragement for the vicar and each other. Our House Group is currently in abeyance while we are committed to other priorities during the Interregnum. In addition to the House Group, there is usually at least one Lent Group, often ecumenical.



# 6. The Wider Church in \_\_\_\_\_ the Community

## 6.1 Wheatley Area Churches (WAC)

St Mary's enjoys an exceptionally strong, loving, and effective relationship with the other three churches in Wheatley, namely Wheatley United Reformed Church, Our Lady of Lourdes (OLL) and Wheatley Community Church. A recently signed Memorandum of Understanding has put this relationship onto a more formal footing in line with guidance from Churches Together in England, and this replaces a previous Local Ecumenical Project (LEP) which involved only St Mary's, the URC, and St Bartholomew's, Holton.

We hold a number of joint services during the year. Historically a linked youth and community group has organised an exceptionally large and significant Holiday Club as well as other community events: these now fall under the umbrella of WAC and we are gradually rebuilding our community work post-pandemic. OLL have been very generous in allowing us to use their building on Sunday mornings during the refurbishment of St Mary's.

St Mary's, St Bartholomew's, and the URC retain the particularly close relationship that developed over many years through the LEP. A URC rep attends PCC meetings while a rep from St Mary's attends URC meetings, and we

hold shared services in addition to those involving the whole of WAC. During our building work and interregnum, the URC have been extremely generous in inviting us to share worship with them, both joint services and as guests.

## 6.2 Community & Outreach

We believe that embracing community secular activity within the church building is a major contribution to our mission. St Mary's Church is deeply involved in the local community, offering support in many practical ways and in partnership with other local churches and the Parish Council.

- The Wheatley Larder takes place every Thursday with the aim of combating food waste and providing free food for those who need it. Average weekly attendance is 35-40 and there is a popular communal café. Donations are passed on to local youth charities, such as the Cof E Primary School, Guides, Brownies, Children's Homes, and social projects.
- The Wheatley Good Neighbour Scheme is aimed at countering isolation and loneliness in the village.
- We actively work with the Wheatley Ukrainian Support Group and Asylum Welcome in order to help refugees integrate into the community.

# The Wider Church in the \_\_\_\_\_ Community

## Community & Outreach

- There are regular Charity Events such as garden parties, Autumn, Spring, and Christmas fairs.
- September 2024 saw our second successful Clubs and Societies' Fair, attended by ~300 people. The Church space is used for a growing number of meetings such as the Rangers, Brownies, Guides and Rainbows, Disability events, Art exhibitions, Concerts, Productions, Lectures, Ceilidhs.
- We make monthly donations to a range of charities and raise funds for three distinct areas i. Local charities, typically schools and nurseries ii. International charities to further the Christian cause plus iii. A range of children's and vulnerable adult charities.

These activities are part of a holistic approach towards the mission, involving many more than those who regularly attend Sunday Services.



*Wheatley Singers*

*Top to bottom: Ceilidh; Art Exhibition & Larder; Holton Players and St Mary's Group perform Macbeth*

# The Wider Church in the \_\_\_\_\_ Community



*Girlguiding*



*Royal British Legion & Wheatley Rugby Union Football Club*



*Holton Players*



*Community Choir*



*Art Classes*



*Clubs & Societies Fair*

# 7. The Village

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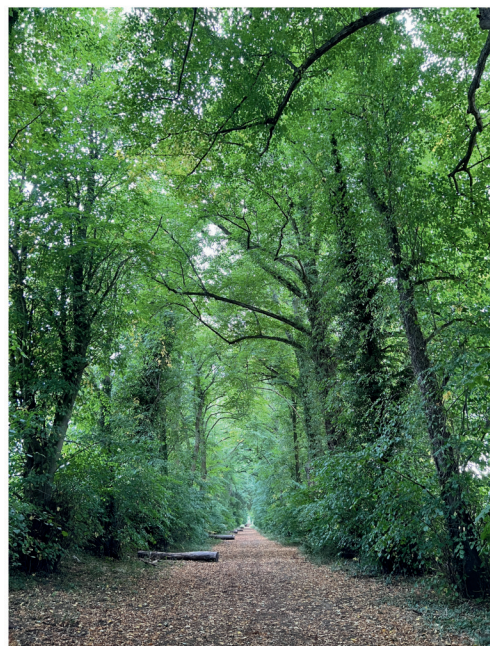
Wheatley is a charming village located in South Oxfordshire, England. It lies about 6 miles east of Oxford, making it conveniently close to the city while retaining a distinct rural charm. As of the 2021 census, Wheatley has a population of approximately 4,300 residents (~2000 homes) and is growing. The village has a mix of families, professionals, and retirees, contributing to a diverse and vibrant community.

There are three schools, Wheatley C of E Primary School (~300 pupils) and Wheatley Park School (~1150 pupils) and the John Watson Community Special School (~100 pupils).

There are also several pre-school nurseries and an English Language School for overseas students.

The former Oxford Brookes Campus is closed and due to make way for 500 new homes. This will present a considerable opportunity as well as an exciting challenge to everyone in the community.

**Further details about the village may be found in Appendix 4.**



# 8. The Church Building

## 8.1 History & Heritage

The church is a grade II\* listed building, designed by the famous Victorian architect, George Street. It is a fine example of Gothic revival architecture and was the early work of the architect. Consecrated in 1857, it was built in the Early English style.

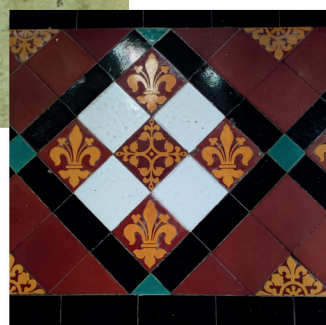
Both William Morris and Philip Webb were apprenticed for much of the building. The distinctive octagonal spire and spacious nave and aisles are prime examples of Street's interest in the play and relationship of solids and planes.

Aspects of the building considered of high significance include the tiled chancel floor, the choir stalls, and inscribed memorials.



*Edward Elton, St. Mary's first vicar*

*Opposite: Prime Minister Theresa May, who was brought up in the vicarage, visits St. Mary's Church*



*Chancel floor tile*



However, St Mary's has a long tradition of engaging with local issues. The first vicar, Edward Elton, not only instigated the building of St Mary's but also the village school; he helped engineer proper drainage in the High Street and arranged for the new railway to pass through the village.

Indeed, the Church was built with the additional aim of curing some of the social ills found in the village at that time. These included poor education, bad living conditions, and various forms of debauchery.

Edward Elton's curate Edward King (later to become the Bishop of Lincoln), was famous for his work with the poor.

The church was built using local labour whenever possible and locally quarried stone. This tradition of being outward-looking and involved in the concerns of the village has continued into the present.

# The Church Building

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## 8.2 The Bells

St Mary's church houses a ring of 6 bells weighing 9-3-10 (cwt-qr-lb). There is a 49-step spiral staircase to the ringing room at the western end of the church.

The bells, which were re-hung in 1996, are relatively easy to ring.

There is a small but enthusiastic group of about 10 ringers. We practise on Fridays between 7:30 pm and 9:00 pm and on Sundays we ring from 9:30 until the start of the service at 10.00 am.



# 9. Church Organisation

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## 9.1 Facilities

In the past year, St Mary's Church has undergone considerable refurbishment. Funding of more than £660,000 for the project ([www.revival@stmarys.org](http://www.revival@stmarys.org)) came largely from donations from the congregation and villagers, with additional grants (roughly 30%) from the DAC, South Oxfordshire District Council, and well-known Grant Funders.

The project has included brand-new stone and tiled flooring, underfloor heating, and large radiant heaters, together with new lighting, new toilets, and redecoration.

The overall effect has been to create a bright, warm, and welcoming environment. The wide columned nave has a potential capacity for gatherings of 250 or more. The heavy long pews have been removed and there is a central space for smaller pews and chairs, which provide flexible seating and can be adjusted according to need.

George Street's fine Chancel and stained glass windows have not been touched by the refurbishment.

The Church was reopened with a service of celebration by the Bishop of Dorchester in September 2024.



# Church Organisation

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## Facilities

There is a small kitchen and meeting room in the West End, with roof space for storage. It is hoped that Phase Two of the Project will eventually provide more kitchen space in the northwest corner and a refurbished vestry and meeting room.

We have a committed team of lay volunteers who work hard to maintain the church building and the Churchyard. The Church also has a specifically 'Green' policy with electrically powered utilities and an environmentally friendly approach.

There is a strong possibility that we will shortly obtain the use of a good-sized garden area adjoining the Churchyard for communal use and for building a shed for storage.

Accessibility: Our church is accessible to all; there is a hearing loop, wi-fi, and Zoom available (much used during the Pandemic). There is also a card reader installed at the back of the Church.



# Church Organisation

## 9.2 Communication

We see communication as critical to growing the church and are open-minded to new innovations and opportunities.

As part of the launch of the new building a new web site has been created:

<https://sites.google.com/stmaryswheatley.org/stmaryswheatley/home>

Our major communications include:

- A weekly notice sheet, e-mailed to the congregation. This provides information and content for Sunday services, prayers, and readings. It also contains notices and announcements. Paper copies are available on the notice board and for the Sunday congregation.
- Verbal notices offered at Sunday services
- A weekly Benefice Prayer e-mail circulated to the congregation, wider Benefice, and friends of the parish
- Entries to the bi-monthly Parish Council Newsletter to all villagers
- A video conferencing system which served us well during lockdown and continues to be used for weekday services and some evening meetings
- 'A Church Near You' website
- St Mary's, Wheatley on Facebook



In June 2024 we embarked on a project with Brookes University, to review our communication and marketing strategy. Its particular focus is on increasing engagement with the community. This project is due for completion in December 2024.

## 9.3 Administration

The governance and administration of the church is currently receiving a major facelift so that the new Vicar is able to focus on spiritual matters and closer engagement with the community.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) follows a typical model for the governance of the Church and is working to ensure that St Mary's is compliant and follows best practices in all matters.

As a charity (1159100), we submit an annual report to the Charities Commission.

# Church Organisation

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The PCC meets 6 times per year and the standing committee meets in the months between.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting and Annual Vestry are well documented both for succession and efficiency. There are currently 13 members of the PCC with an electoral roll currently at 97. The standing committee has 8 members. We send three representatives to the Deanery Synod and three representatives to the Wheatley Area Churches committee.

In order to support our two Church Wardens during the interregnum, we have designed a structure to manage the running of the church. We now have five working groups: Spiritual, Governance, Pastoral, Events/Social, and Building.

However, the PCC remains the decision-making authority for all matters and receives regular reports from these bodies.

We employ administrative support for the Vicar, currently half a day per week, and a Director of Music with an assistant. **(See Section 4.2 Music).**

We have an experienced volunteer Safeguarding Officer who also acts on behalf of the other Churches in the Benefice, and a DBS validator. All PCC members have completed the basic online safeguarding awareness training and similar training is provided for anyone who holds an office or who has a significant role in the parish.

By the time the new Vicar is in post, we will have completed a refresh of GDPR best practice and will have in place a secure and single version of the truth of church contacts, along with agreed data processing controls.

One of the wardens acts as the Health and Safety Officer and reports on any incidents and updates to the PCC on a bi-monthly basis.

# Church Organisation ---

## 9.5 Financial Overview

The Parish finances are in good order. Our income is typically ~£80,000k per annum, derived from regular giving (via the Parish Giving Scheme or regular standing orders), fundraising events, hall hire, and grants. The Parish Share is ~£64,000. The refurbished building is already attracting some additional income and we expect this to rapidly increase over the year ahead.

Maintenance of the Church Fabric has been greatly helped by the creation of The Friends of St Mary's, a group of villagers, many of whom are not regular Church goers, but who understand the significance of the local Church and its communal ties.

Fundraising for the Refurbishment Project *Revival at St Mary's* was a major undertaking (**See Section 10. Facilities**) and relied on the dedication and generosity of many individuals and Grant Funders.

We also run a separate account on behalf of the Wheatley Larder and for the dedicated funds of our Ukrainian Refugees.

# 10. Conclusion

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## 10.1 Opportunities

The refurbishment of the church building and vicarage offers St Mary's an exciting future:

- A warm and welcoming space to hold our own activities for young and old
- Increased engagement with community groups, particularly the Primary School and the Guides and Brownies.
- A new Junior Choir Project to build on our excellent musical offering
- The potential to re-establish our creche and children's activities during our morning service
- A new garden area for outdoor activities
- A new income stream from church bookings



## 10.2 Challenges

In our new vicar we are looking for a leader who will address these challenges as we try to live out our mission:

- Helping the current congregation to grow into a deeper faith
- Translating community engagement, particularly with young people, into increased church involvement
- Engaging with the new housing estate to be built on the Brookes University site
- Maintaining the right balance between church and community use of our beautiful building

# APPENDICES

# Appendix 1

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## **Contact Information**

Church Address: Church Road, Wheatley, Oxford, OX33 1LZ

Church Office Address: The Vicarage, 18 London Road, Wheatley, Oxford, OX33 1YA

Phone: 01865 872224

Email: [admin@stmaryswheatley.org](mailto:admin@stmaryswheatley.org)

Website: <https://sites.google.com/stmaryswheatley.org/stmaryswheatley/home>

# Appendix 2

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## WORSHIP - FURTHER DETAILS

### **Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany**

We hold carol services at Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. Our Crib service is popular with families in the village, and we are gradually returning to the pre-pandemic attendance of around 150 adults and children. Midnight Mass, 8am BCP Communion, and 10am Family Communion complete our celebrations.

### **Lent, Holy Week, and Eastertide**

We begin our Lenten observance on Ash Wednesday with mid-day and evening celebrations of the Eucharist with ashing, while our Palm Sunday procession is shared with the other churches in the village.

During Holy Week, Holy Communion is celebrated daily from Monday to Wednesday. On Maundy Thursday a shared communion service is held at the United Reformed Church. Good Friday begins with Stations of the Cross at Our Lady of Lourdes (Roman Catholic), followed by an ecumenical procession around the village. An hour at the cross is observed at 2pm. Compline is said daily through Holy Week.

Easter Sunday begins either with an informal outdoor Dawn Communion Service or indoors with a longer Easter Vigil and Eucharist Service (alternate years). This is followed by the usual 8am BCP Holy Communion and 10am Family Eucharist services. Ascension Day is marked with an evening Eucharist service, occasionally outdoors.

### **Harvest & Remembrance Tide**

We support the local Food Bank at our Harvest Celebration. Those who have been recently bereaved are invited to an All Souls Service, while St Mary's hosts a service for the village on Remembrance Sunday, sharing the leading of this service with other churches.

# Appendix 3

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## BENEFICE CHURCHES

### **The Parish of Albury and Tiddington – St Helen’s**

The parish includes the villages of Albury and Tiddington which are documented in the Domesday Book but the only church, St Helens, is in Albury, while the majority of the population now live in Tiddington. There are outlying farms and some houses on Milton Common. The village lies on both sides of the A418 with frequent buses to Thame, Wheatley, and Oxford but there is no public transport to the other churches in the cluster. It has a well-used village hall and well-supported pub, the Fox and Goat, and a flourishing Cricket club. The population is a little under 1000.

The church has three regular services a month with the house for duty priest, and a service on the other Sunday when a lay reader is available. The regular services include BCP, Common Worship, and a family service. On the fifth Sunday, there is a combined service within the cluster. The regular congregation is small, about 10, and at Festivals, Christmas, Easter, and Harvest it may be up to 100. After the Harvest festival service, we organise a “bring and share” Harvest supper in the village hall which is attended by many of the residents of the village. There are eight on the PCC including two church wardens.

### **The Parish of Holton – St. Bartholomew’s**

Holton is on the northern border of Wheatley. The village is recorded in the Domesday book. Holton church, dedicated to St Bartholomew, dates from the 12th century. General Fairfax the leader of the Parliamentary forces used Holton Park’s moated manor house as his headquarters during the final siege of Oxford and in 1646 General Ireton married Bridget Cromwell at Holton Park in the presence of her father Oliver Cromwell, whose signature is in the church register. The current population of the village is about 400 but that number will balloon with the building of about 500 houses on the old Oxford Brookes site that falls within the parish. There are no shops or primary school in the village with the nearest being at Wheatley. The large secondary school, Wheatley Park School, is in Holton Park and takes pupils from many south Oxfordshire villages.

*Continued on next page...*

### *St. Bartholomew*

In recent years services have been held at St Bartholomew's at 11 am on two Sunday mornings each month, both Common Worship. On the other Sundays there are shared services with the other churches in Wheatley and on the fifth Sunday, when these occur, with the other churches in the cluster. The regular congregation is small but more villagers attend services at the main festivals. The regular organist retired recently and since then recorded music has been used for the hymns. Visiting organists play for special services.

### **The Parish of Waterperry – St Mary the Virgin**

Waterperry Village has an adult population of approximately 120 and flanks a cul-de-sac ending at Waterperry House and the Church. A handful of properties on Waterperry Common and the small settlement at Thomley are also in the Parish. There has been limited building development in the village in recent years - mainly alterations to old properties, and barn conversions. Waterperry House dates from medieval times and was partly rebuilt in 1713. The house is now owned by the 'School of Economic Science' (SES). The School maintains courteous contact with the village and provides facilities in Waterperry House for Parish and PCC meetings and occasional social events.

There are four farms in the Parish, and though few in the village are involved in farming, a few of the adult population are employed part or full-time at the Horticultural Centre and Waterperry Gardens which surround Waterperry House. These gardens attract thousands of visitors monthly and there is an annual Opera Festival. The village has no shop, pub, or village hall, thus making few opportunities for villagers to meet.

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, situated in Waterperry Gardens, is small but is one of the loveliest in Oxfordshire, with medieval glass, box pews, a carved Jacobean two-tier pulpit, and a rare palimpsest brass. Restoration has been carried out on a 14th-century tomb effigy, but no major work is currently required on the fabric. There are two services a month, both BCP at which attendance is normally 3-6. There are well-attended Harvest, Christmas, and Easter services.

Continued on next page...

### **The Parish of Waterstock – St Leonard’s Church**

The parish of Waterstock is the smallest in the cluster with a population of about 58 people. It was historically an estate village and a farming community, and it is still an active and close-knit community where almost everybody knows and cares for each other in a very Christian way. There is an equestrian centre with a transitory community which has in the past included visiting Olympic teams. There is no village hall, pub, or shop; there are regular bring-and-share events in houses or gardens over the course of the year that allow the village residents to meet each other following the Harvest Festival or the Carol service. The village sits between Wheatley and Thame.

The Church records date back to 1190; the church was later rebuilt with additions at different periods and a sensitive restoration in the 19th century. Overhead heating is used for services in the building. The church is the only building for larger gatherings and it attracts active support from most of the residents, even those who seldom or never attend services. They perform duties such as flower arranging, cleaning, and mowing the churchyard. The building is used for secular parish meetings and other village events. There is a rota of 10 people who lock and unlock the church daily. There are Sunday services on the first and third Sundays of the month, both BCP. On a regular basis, around eight to ten people attend but many more attend for festivals and other special occasions.

# Appendix 4

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## THE VILLAGE OF WHEATLEY

### **The Village of Wheatley**

Wheatley has a rich historical background; the name is derived from the Old English words "hwæte" (wheat) and "leah" (woodland clearing), reflecting its agricultural roots. Key historical landmarks include St Mary's Church (Grade II\* listed, 1856), the Manor House (10th-century origins), the Lockup (1834), and the Windmill (18th century). Ripon College Cuddesdon is situated two miles to the south in the village of Cuddesdon.

The village has excellent transport links being situated 2.5 miles from junction 8 of the M40, offering convenient road access to Birmingham (60 miles) and London (50 miles). There is a regular bus service to Oxford and Thame, the stop being adjacent to St Mary's Church. Trains operate from Haddenham and Thame Parkway (9 miles) and both Oxford and Oxford Parkway stations (6-7 miles) offering connections to Worcester, Birmingham, London, and Didcot (South West and Wales).

The village is well served by one large and two small supermarkets. There is a post office, two restaurants, food takeaways, a bakery, two cafes, a laundrette, a butcher and several pubs. Healthcare services are fronted by the highly regarded Morland House GP surgery and pharmacy, a dentist, a hearing specialist, and a pharmacy. There are two care homes in the village, including the recently opened Wellford Gardens. The village hosts two farm shops /garden centres and is in close proximity to Waterperry Gardens.

We have a large sportscentre in the grounds of Wheatley Park School plus a sports field with rugby, football, netball and floodlit tennis facilities. There are also plans to convert one of the existing school fields into a community open space. There are two recreational grounds in the village for children to exercise and enjoy themselves.

Wheatley is served by an active Parish Council and boasts a strong sense of community culture. It offers a range of clubs and societies covering a multitude of interests which are available to all age groups. The newly refurbished St Mary's will be one of several facilities in the village providing a home for these groups.

*Continued on next page...*

### *The Village of Wheatley*

There are several local events to celebrate festivals, some of which are held at St Mary's e.g. Remembrance Day Service and the Village Carol Service.

More information can be found by reading the Parish Council Newsletter:

<https://wheatleyparishcouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024-06-07-WEB-v2.pdf>

Wheatley is surrounded by picturesque countryside, making it an ideal location for outdoor enthusiasts. The nearby Shotover Country Park and the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty offer opportunities for walking, cycling, and nature observation as do several walks and trails. The village Open Spaces Committee is working on a new facility to offer leisure, nature observation, and informal sports facilities within the village. Further afield we have the attractions offered by the historic city of Oxford and Blenheim Palace.

Wheatley is a charming English village that blends history with modern amenities. Its close-knit community, rich heritage, and beautiful surroundings make it an attractive place to live, work, and visit.



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