

Little Blakenham Annual Parish Meeting

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall on Tuesday, 16th May 2023 at 7pm

PRESENT: Cllr W Binder (PC), S Wright (PC), L Keen (PC), B Palmer (PC), J Latham (PC), A Browne (PC), M Kenningale (PCC) and three members of the Public

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs J Blackburn (Clerk), County Cllr Chambers and District Cllr Marriott.

LB01/23/24 - CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman of Little Blakenham Parish Council, Cllr Wally Binder, welcomed those present.

LB02/23/24 - APOLOGIES

No apologies had been received.

LB03/23/24 - MINUTES 17th MAY 2022

The minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting, held on 17th May 2022, were approved as a true record and were duly signed by the Chair.

LB04/23/24 - REPORTS RELATING TO THE PARISH

Representatives of the following organisations were invited to speak and answer any questions. Where received, their reports are attached to the Minutes.

a) **Little Blakenham Parish Council** – *Cllr Wally Binder*

Cllr Binder expressed his thanks to the Clerk and she was given a round of applause for her help and expertise in taking over the role.

b) **Suffolk County Council** – *Cllr Chris Chambers*

Cllr Chambers reported on the following subjects:

- 99% of pupils were successful in getting their first choice of school
- Devolution deal
- Draft Budget had been approved
- Additional funds available for services
- Solar Panels
- £3 million funding for the SEND (Special Education Needs) Capital Programme

c) **Mid-Suffolk District Council** – *Cllr Adrienne Marriott*

Cllr Marriott reported on the following items:

- Cycling and Footpaths Infrastructure Plan
- CiL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money
- 1,000 empty homes across Suffolk – scheme to bring them back into use

d) **Little Blakenham Parochial Church Council** – *Michele Kenningale*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Mrs Kenningale briefly went through her report.
Mrs Kenningale also went through the Village Report (as attached).

LB05/23/24 - PUBLIC FORUM

No issues were raised.

The meeting closed at 7.35pm.

Chairman Date



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Attached separately.

Population Little Blakenham

How many people live locally?	Children Under 16	Working Age Adults (16 to 64)	People Aged 65 +	Dependency Ratio
295	68 (23.0%)	179 (60.7%)	48 (16.3%)	0.65
Males: 48.5% Females: 51.5%	Mid Sflk Avg = 18.4% England Avg = 18.9%	Mid Sflk Avg = 61.5% England Avg = 64.7%	Mid Sflk Avg = 20.1% England Avg = 16.3%	Mid Sflk Avg = 0.63 England Avg = 0.55

Source: Little Blakenham Housing and Population data profile Mid Suffolk District Council, updated 2019. <https://www.babergh.gov.uk> › Parish-Profiles

The Parochial Church Council (P.C.C) are Charity Trustees governed by the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956. PCC members hold office in accordance with the Church Representation Rules either ex officio, by election or appointment at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting or by co-option.

This Annual and Fabric, Goods and Ornaments Report of St Mary the Virgin Church is a significant document which reflects the life of our village church in accordance with The Church Representation Rules (Rule 9(1) (b)) which requires '*an annual report on the proceedings of the parochial church council and the activities of the parish generally.*'

Aims and Objectives

The sole charitable object of the PCC is the '*promotion of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England*' and has a statutory responsibility to co-operate with the minister in promoting in the parish, the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

As Charity Trustees, members have a duty to meet the 'public benefit' requirement and demonstrate our aims are for the public benefit through the advancement of education, religion, or relieving poverty. Alongside being lawfully responsible for the maintenance of the fabric of the parish church and churchyard and to consider how to manage maintenance issues, including those arising out of the quinquennial inspections.

Our first objective is Christian fellowship through regular provision for worship and promotion of the Gospel to our community, alongside enabling individuals to receive spiritual guidance and education in the Christian doctrine and to use that strength to serve God and contribute towards a better society and financial stability for the future vision of our parish church.

Our main aims this year have been:

- Promote the Christian doctrine through regular services and reintegrate our church back into the community and beyond.
- To support and work in partnership with Reverend Eric Falla.
- Promote and deliver fundraising events to the community to assist building relationships and friendships, individual's financial resources and aid our churches financial stability.
- Continue addressing List, A items on the 2020 Quinquennial Report, compiling a maintenance plan but specifically the monitoring, management and continued maintenance of the East wall.
- Encourage and welcome new members to our congregation, volunteers, and new PCC members.

PCC Membership and Roles

The PCC APCM was held on 21st April 2022 and the following persons have served as members for all of the period.

Priest in Charge – Reverend Eric Falla (installed 12th April 2021, Instituted 22nd March 2023)

Churchwarden - Michele Kenningale

Vacancy

Secretary – Michele Kenningale

Treasurer – Julia Buckmaster

Deanery Synod Representative - Angeline Whittaker

Vacancy

Electoral Roll Officer – Vacant

Safeguarding: Rev Eric Falla

Health and Safety: Rev Eric Falla and Michele Kenningale

Designated Fire Officer: Angie Whittaker

Lorraine Wright,
Rita Palmer.

PCC Meetings

In 2022 the PCC managed to hold 3 of the 4 planned meetings, therefore did not meet the required regulations of at least four meetings in a 12 Month period.

PCC Meetings have been held on:

18th January, April 21st APCM followed by PCC meeting, 27th June. The planned 4th meeting for the 19th of September was cancelled due to Queen Elizabeth II funeral and rescheduled on 14th November. Unfortunately, the November meeting was only attended by two of the five PCC members due to, two members being unwell and another member had a family member in hospital.

Rector's Annual Benefice Report for APCM's 2022

I submit this report to the APCMs of the Benefice of Bramford with Little Blakenham, Baylham and Nettlestead. Thank you for taking the time to read this report. The past year 2022 has of course been marked by our return to a more normal environment. We have settled into a rhythm of services and continue to take occasional services.

Services

One of the pressures in emerging from lockdown was to return to a full offering of Sunday worship services as soon as possible. To this end we have a rota offering services in Little Blakenham 11am, Nettlestead 10am and Baylham 4pm every month with 10am Holy Communion twice a month in Bramford and an 8am service twice a month. We also offer a families @ 4 service the first Sunday of the month at Bramford. Morning prayer is said every weekday in church. We also offer services during the major festivals, Holy Week and Easter, Rogation, Harvest, Remembrance, Advent and Christmas as well as All Souls and All Saints to which the wider community attend. I am convinced that our greatest evangelistic and growth opportunities come from how we do Sunday worship **all together**, a reminder that we are a benefice of churches, and I would encourage people to worship not just in the church in the parish in which they live but to come together on Sunday in other churches.

On a personal note, I was sorry have missed the Christmas Eve and Christmas day services in the benefice, as I was admitted to hospital. Thank you to all those who jumped in at the last moment to ensure the Crib services went ahead, and to those clergy who covered services at Bramford and Baylham

We may well say that all our parishes are pressured in some way. This is a time for us to challenge ourselves in how we picture the role of the church, for us to look for the opportunities which are presented to us to be church here and now in each place. Our parishes however are particularly challenged. Sunday is no longer seen as the day of rest and people are busy. People over the years have settled into new habits which do not include giving thanks on a Sunday in church.

We were able to elect Churchwarden/s at Little Blakenham and Baylham but not at Bramford or Nettlestead at the 2022 APCM's.

Our church buildings are a highly emotive subject, both for those who have faithfully served for many years and love those buildings, and for the community in which that building is placed. We have had to deal with a potential structural matter at St Mary's Little Blakenham, however after various consultations the church is not in as critical condition as previously thought. The good news is that the Phase one work at Nettlestead has been completed. And work is now moving toward Phase two. We need to think about our buildings being places in which the communities in which they are placed can make use of them, not just on Sunday but at other times too.

We celebrated HM The Queens Platinum Jubilee during the year, with events taking place in Bramford and Baylham. Latterly we opened all our churches following the death of the queen. Thank you to all who helped in any way on both these occasions.

Bell Ringing – Bramford During this year we have managed to recruit a new band of ringers at Bramford. They have been faithful in attending practice and are now very proficient ringers. They have had a busy year, ringing for the Platinum Jubilee, the Queen Funeral, and occasional ringing before services on a Sundays. They have also rung for several Weddings, and they visit other towers to improve their ringing skills. Many Thanks to John Doy the Bell Captain and Matt his deputy for the work they have done in training them.

I am pleased that we were able to pay the full amount requested for our Benefice parish share for 2022.

I believe we have managed coming out of lockdown well. But at time of writing need to remind ourselves that the threat from Covid is far from over.

Occasional Offices

2022 saw occasional services (weddings, baptisms, funerals) in the Benefice. The breakdown is:

- 7 Baptisms
- 7 weddings
- 28 Funerals

Primary School

I continue to visit and take a weekly assembly at Bramford Primary school during term time. The school visits St Mary's Bramford church for the major church festivals at Easter, Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas.

I visit several people across the benefice in their home offering communion. If you know of people who would like to receive communion at home, please let me know.

Outreach

We have encountered difficulties in getting the In Touch magazine to publish details of services for Lt Blakenham, Nettlestead and Baylham following a change of Editor. We continue to seek a resolution to this issue.

The A Church Near You (ACNY) website is now as up to date as I can keep it, it can be found at: <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/>

They are planning for 2023 to create a page where all churches in a benefice are on one page rather than four separate entries. We continue offering Facebook posts for all churches in the benefice giving details of services and other events in the four parishes of the benefice. Please do look if you have not done so already. It is called, Benefice of Bramford, Little Blakenham, Baylham, Nettlestead

Thanks

A big thank you to all the parishes for the various fundraising and social events that have taken place during this year. Thanks to the Friends of Baylham church for their continued support of St Peter's Baylham.

Monthly Coffee mornings at Bramford and Little Blakenham.

Roy Tricker Talk at Little Blakenham

Summer Fayre in Bramford

Jumble sale at Little Blakenham

Open Garden in Little Blakenham Woodland for Nettlestead and Little Blakenham Churches.

Wild-flower open garden at Eunice and Wally Binders home for Nettlestead.

Christmas Fairs at Bramford and Little Blakenham

Teddy bear Parachute jump at Bramford

Harvest supper at Nettlestead

Christmas Tree festival at Bramford

Harvest lunch at Bramford

Thanks to the members of the PCC's. Its lovely to minister into a situation of such variety and many passionate and motivated people. I am deeply grateful to our Churchwardens, PCC members and volunteers who keep our parishes going, and display so much commitment and enthusiasm.

During this year we said farewell to a faithful servant of Bramford church Colin Elsdon. We give thanks for his many years of faithful service at Bramford. I know he will always be remembered for his work in restoring the church tower and spire of St Mary's Bramford.

Finally, we thank the God we worship for the opportunity to build the kingdom with Him. However, we see the church, it ultimately exists for His honour and glory.

Reverend Eric Falla

Rector

Extraordinary PCC Finance Meeting

26th January 2022 held at the Vicarage Bramford.

Extraordinary Benefice Meetings of Churchwardens and Treasurers with Rev Eric Falla

March 7th, 2022, Benefice Parish Share allocation meeting held at the Vicarage Bramford.

Life Events 2022

Baptisms: One, held on 23rd October 2022 (First baptism since 7th December 2014)

Confirmations: None since 1st November 1998.

Marriages: One Wedding Blessing held on 22nd October 2022 and officiated by Rev Peter Wolton a clergy friend of those involved.

Please note: The Marriage Register was deposited at Ipswich Registry Office in 2021 as per new guidelines. Prior to removal the last marriage documented in the Register was dated 6/11/2019).

Funerals: None, the last funeral was on Wednesday 17th November 2021.



A short service was held on Armistice Day, 11th November 2022 to give thanks and remember all those who have lost their lives in the World Wars, especially our local man Percy Herbert Welham of the Suffolk Regiment who lived on Leather Bottle Hill and has a Commonwealth War Grave in our churchyard.

Church Services

The return of regular services has positively increased since Rev Eric's arrival. PCC members give thanks to all those who support us and also those from our sister parishes.

Morning Prayer

Morning prayer is held every 3rd Wednesday in the month at 08.30am

The tables below reflect monthly attendance although they may appear low, historically, the attendance numbers are consistent with those recorded at the start of the service register started in 1977.

Morning Prayer 2022	Attendance	Morning Prayer 2022	Attendance	Morning Prayer 2022	Attendance
January 19 th	2	May	3	September	3
February 16 th	1	June	Not recorded	October	3
March 16 th	4	July	Not recorded	November	1
April	Not recorded	August	2	December	Not recorded

Table 1. The average numbers of adults attending from June 2021-April 2022.¹

Sunday Worship

Sunday worship is held on the fourth Sunday in the month at 11am.

Alike Morning prayer, attendances at Sunday services have also historically fluctuated over the years.

It cannot be denied that since the declaration of the Covid pandemic on 23rd March 2020 there had been an in-measurable effect on every aspect of life including spiritually. During Covid there was a period that Holy Communion could only be taken 'in part', we are pleased to report that all churches in the Benefice now receive full communion and have also replaced the traditional wafers with bread.

Sunday worship is regularly supported by some congregation members from our sister parishes especially Bramford and our provision of post service homemade refreshments have become quite a social event and provides an opportunity to build relationships and have a chat.

There is 'giving basket' at the church at the font for donations all year round which are then distributed to local charities. We give thanks to those who have and continue to donate items.

Sunday Worship 2022	Attendance	Sunday Worship 2022	Attendance
January 23 rd	15	August 28 th	16
February 27 th	18	September 25 th	18
March 27 th	12	October 23 rd (also a Baptism)	28
April 24 th	16	November 27 th	Not recorded
May 22 nd	16	December 18 th Carol Service	42
June 26 th	11		
July 24 th	7		

Table 2. Sunday and Festival Worship attendance, January 2022-December 2022.²

¹ St Mary the Virgin Church, Little Blakenham, Service Register.

² St Mary the Virgin Church, Little Blakenham, Service Register.

Children and Young Adults

We sadly have no young people presently who attend our church, this is an issue the PCC is keen to change and will be focusing upon over the next year and welcome and support any new members of our growing congregation.

Pastoral Care and Service to the Community

Pastoral care for one another and our wider community continues to be at the heart of our parish life. The contact number for the Vicar is displayed on the church notice boards at the entrance gate and south porch, 'In Touch' magazine and on social media, through A Church Near You, Nextdoor App and the Benefice Facebook page for anyone with pastoral concerns.

Parish Safeguarding

The parish Safeguarding Policy is available for inspection in the parish church and Diocesan policy has been referred to and followed.

Eric is presently designated Safeguarding Officer, whilst the PCC attempt to find a willing candidate. Anyone with concerns in the area of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults should contact Eric or the churchwarden in Eric's absence.

Charitable Giving

Alongside this Eric has introduced a 'giving basket' at the church font for donations all year round which are distributed to local charities. We give thanks to those who have and continue to donate items.

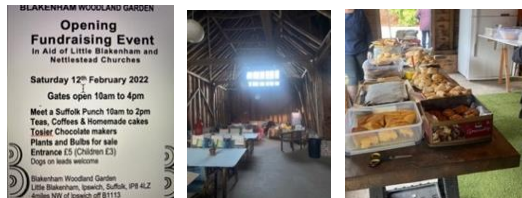
Communication, Publicity and Community Events 2022

Making a difference to our profile.

The PCC recognises the importance of ensuring the church is open, welcoming and used by its community and visitors alike. The PCC are keen for the church to be used not only for religious services but for reflection, social events and as a point of contact. The biggest challenge continues to be the reintegration of the church back into the community.

Blakenham Woodland Garden Snowdrop Festival 12th January 2022

Marcia (Lady) Blakenham very kindly invited ourselves and those of Nettlestead to make, bake and host the refreshments for the annual Snowdrop Festival. The proceeds from the day were divided equally between the two churches which were further added too with the very generous donation of the entrance monies and a donation from those selling snowdrops, hot chocolate and wool products. Our gratitude goes to Marcia and all the donators and everyone involved for their generous support and who made the day so enjoyable and special.



Blakenham Woodland Garden Snowdrop Festival 12th January 2022

Ride and Stride Bike Ride 10th September 2022



The Annual Sponsored Ride and Stride is a national event, held every second Saturday in September. Cyclists and walkers all-round the country are out making money for their local county Churches Trust.

The idea started in Suffolk, and is the main source of income to Suffolk Historic Churches Trust which enable the Trust to make grants to churches and chapels of all denominations towards repair and restoration costs. Participants are sponsored for each place of worship visited between 9.00am and 5.00pm on Ride and Stride Day or with a donation, regardless of the number of churches visited. The money raised by each cyclist or walker is shared equally between the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust and the place of worship nominated by the participant.

As important as the participants are the many volunteers who give up the day to man the churches and chapels and sign in the cyclists and walkers as they arrive. Our church supports this event each year with a team of volunteers, sadly our church received no donations, but it was fun taking part.

Coffee Mornings 10am-12noon 3rd Saturday each month in the Village Hall



PCC Coffee mornings were started in 2021 held in the Village Hall and cease over the winter months.

On March 12th they recommenced for 2022 and we are pleased to report that attendance is slowly rising. The PCC continually review the mornings and are please to confirm that they will continue for the foreseeable future.

Fundraising and Parish Support

Annual Jumble Sale 30th April 2022

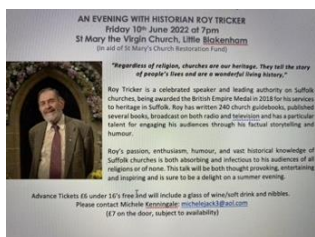


This PCC annual attended and needed more than crisis. Some of the local charities whilst which we know will on e-bay.



event is held in April and is always well supported with donations. The event is ever presently due to the 'cost of living' items that are not sold are donated to others, namely branded/vintage items not achieve a reflective cost are sold

Roy Tricker Event 10th June 2022



In 2022 the church guide was updated by the churchwarden with the assistance of Roy Tricker. On the 10th of June Roy kindly gave a talk on the history of the church which was very well attended, tickets included a post talk buffet provided by PCC members and friends of the church at the Old Rectory courtyard, with the kind support of the Rectory's owner.

'Use it or loose it' Meeting



A 'Use it or Loose It' village meeting had been planned for 21st September 2022 to obtain the views of residents and congregation members regarding the usage of the church, but this was cancelled due to the sad announcement of Queen Elizabeth II death.

Harvest Festival 16th September 2022

The long tradition of giving thanks for the Harvest through the donation of unperishable goods continues in our church which are donated to a different local food bank each year.



Harvest Festival

Christmas Bazaar 26th November 2022



Christmas Bazaar 2022

The Christmas Bazaar held on 26th November was again supported exceptionally well, PCC members were proud to hear the positive feedback regarding the quality of goods.

This year Rev. Eric was not only in the spirit of Christmas with his outfit but brought his speakers which were placed outside the church and bellowed out songs of Christmas across the village, even passing walkers couldn't resist the pull as inquisitiveness got the better of them to find out what was happening and called in. They were especially glad on a cold winters day to stop and have something to eat and some hot mulled wine to warm them up before venturing onwards to their destination.

It continues to surprise PCC members just how well this event is supported from not only residents but by those from other parishes alongside the generous donations we receive for our events. This event always makes such a significant financial contribution to St Mary's fundraising as well as raising the churches profile to the community and beyond and is definitely a social event that brings people together. Our grateful thanks to everyone who donated items, baked, contributed and supported us.

Carol Singing 16th December 2022



Eric 2021

The PCC arranged for the second year a Carol Singing event around The Beeches and Little Box Meadow. Unfortunately, due to snow over the previous days and freezing temperatures, concerns were raised over safety and sadly the event was cancelled.

Christingle Service by candlelight 18th December 2022.



Our most and well service of the Christmas (Christingle)



anticipated attended year is our

Service.

earlier

Whilst 2021 witnessed a disappointing attendance due to an announcement by the government regarding Covid. This year we were so pleased that despite the cold and rain, people made the effort to come and we had an attendance of 42 in the congregation including several new faces. Many stayed for the post service refreshments which included seasonal warm mulled wine and a host of classic Christmas homemade bakes.

Out of all our services, it is at this special time of year that our little village church truly comes alive and is filled with love. We have reintroduced over the last three years a unique element of our church and village history to the Christmas service by playing the 'Little Blakenham Carol'. This is an old carol which survived the days when the churches standardised onto a common hymnal. The words were originally discovered by Pete Jennings of BBC Radio Suffolk, and Chairman of the Suffolk Pagan Society in a notebook started in 1891 by folklorist Charles Partridge, Charles had quoted Revd John Jackson of Little Blakenham, who prior to his death in 1895 had taken down the words from an aged parishioner.³

Methods of Communication

Social media platforms used:

A Church Near You (ACNY), St Mary's Nextdoor App, Benefice Facebook page and the Little Blakenham Nextdoor/Facebook Page

Eric posts each month in the 'In Touch' magazine.

We also use posters to advertise events.

We also have a page dedicated to St Mary's on 'British Express' Tourism website to attract visitors and due to the hidden position of the church, a sandwich chalk board is used outside by the road to advertise when the church is open in an attempt to increase visitors, there is also a visitors book inside for feedback.

Professional Advisors

Bankers: Lloyds Bank, 13 Cornhill, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 1DG.

Insurers: Ecclesiastical Insurance Group, Beaufort House, Brunswick Road, Gloucester, GL1 1JZ

Architect: David Whymark, The Studio, Stack Wood Road, Polstead, Colchester, C06 5BA.

Independent Examiner: Harry Moore F.C.A, Chartered Accountant, 2 Lime Kiln Close, Claydon, IP6 OAW.

Churchwardens' Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Churches

³ The village has its own version of an old carol, surviving the days when the churches standardised onto a common hymnal. Pete Jennings of BBC Radio Suffolk, and also Chairman of the Suffolk Pagan Society, found the words in a notebook started in 1891 by a folklorist called Charles Partridge. He was quoting Revd John Jackson of Little Blakenham, who had taken down the words from an aged parishioner. This had been published in "Suffolk Notes & Queries" No 121. Pete could not locate a version of the work locally, so researched at Cecil Sharp House in London, the headquarters of the English Folk Song And Song Society. The only thing Pete could find related to it was an Irish hymnal, which provided some similar verses and a tune, under the title "The Sinner's Redemption". Pete eventually offered the material to folk trio Artisan from Yorkshire. Enquiries by a former church organist uncovered the fact that a very similar version of the carol can easily be found in the New Oxford Book of Carols.

This year's summary has been a very simple one regarding the fabric of St Mary's church, there has been a lot to address, plan and do!



Little Blakenham Church etched by Henry Davy c.1857

St Mary the Virgin, Little Blakenham is a Grade I listed medieval building situated high up on a hill yet in a tucked away rural setting and serves a population of approximately 295 souls.

The church became Grade I listed on December 9th 1955 and consists of Nave, chancel, west tower, south porch. Plastered rubble walling to body of church with freestone dressings. The tower has exposed rubble walls of flint with brick and limestone inclusions. Plain tiled roofs (the tower roof is leaded with battlemented parapets). The porch is probably of C15 origin, with moulded doorway and the remnants of side windows (all in freestone) and coupled-rafter roof; major repairs in brickwork are of C16 and later. Good mid C13 east chancel window of 3 stepped lancets under one arch, with pierced trefoils in the spandrels. On the inner face are engaged columns and on either side are large recesses with trefoiled heads and similar columns; in the survey of J.H. and Jas Parker (1855), both recesses had mediaeval figure paintings. A lancet in the east wall has 2 figures and freezework painted on the reveals; these were repainted in 1850. A mid C14 south chancel window has mask corbels. Extensive late C14 alterations include most of the 2-light windows, the south nave doorway and the plain unbuttressed tower. This has brick relieving arches above windows and a lion-head gargoyle on the west. The bell-frame is original, repaired in C16. Late C14 canted and boarded nave roof with moulded cornice; the chancel roof was probably rebuilt in 1868. Early C16 alterations include 2 chancel windows, priest's doorway and piscina. Plain octagonal font, perhaps of c.1400. A painted coat of arms of James II, dated 1685. Other internal furnishings including Gothic box pews, are of 1868.⁴

The PCC is made up of five members and we are always looking for new members alongside younger people interested in caring for our building to ensure it is here for future generations, without this the future of both the PCC and church is bleak.

The last major refurbishment of the church was by Rev Jackson in August 1868 when the church is described '*...In the course of years the church had been suffered to fall into so bad state of repair that it became absolutely necessary that something should be done. Both roof and walls were in a dilapidated condition, and it was very easy to suggest alterations in the internal arrangement of the church which would greatly conduce to the comfort and convenience of the congregation*'.⁵

This major refurbishment cost £300, of which Rev Jackson donated £90 and the churchwarden Mr Josselyn £50. It appears that Rev Jackson decided to 'get in quick' to raise the money required for the refurbishment by a steep rise in church rates in the same year church rates were abolished. The rate rise caused so much uproar from some of the rate payers and dissenters in the village that it made the Ipswich Journal newspaper, owned by Rev Jackson's family.

We now find ourselves heading towards a very similar position which has been enhanced also by many years of neglect, oh how much easier it would be to have such a thing as a church rate now!

Oral history tells us that at some point in the mid 1950's, someone decided it would be a good idea to paint the internal walls including the beautiful historic lancet wall paintings on the east wall with normal paint and not limewash! The combination of non-breathable paint on the inside and concrete covered exterior walls has resulted in walls that run with water after services in autumn and winter, some internal areas of damp and deterioration of some pews secondary also to the raised soil levels specifically on the north side.

⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251408> Church of St Mary, Little Blakenham.

⁵ <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001325/18680829/078/0006> Restoration of Little Blakenham Church, The Suffolk Chronicle; or Weekly General Advertiser & County Express. - Saturday 29 August 1868, p.6

The two historical wall paintings on the lancet windows either side of the East window which were painted over are lost, conservationists assessed the area in 2001 however, the cost of revealing the historical wall paintings was too expensive.



Unknown date.

2021

Obtaining maintenance quotes was seriously affected by the Covid pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. We were unable to apply for grants due to the lack of a maintenance plan and attempts to join Ecclesiastical Insurance 'maintenance booker' were met with the frustrating issue that they do not operate in Suffolk presently and still do not in 2022.

Thankfully we now have regular services again, leadership, guidance, and support to enable us to move forward following the appointment of Reverend Eric Falla. The increase in financial revenue through regular services and fundraising has enabled us to pay our parish share and add to our fabric account.

However although we find ourselves in a positive position financially much of this revenue has been swallowed up recently with bills for East wall investigations. The PCC are fully aware we will need to be cautious with our public limited finances and use risk assessment to prioritise the most urgent repairs.

In 2022 the two main areas of concerns have been the stabilising of the smaller of our two John Darby bells dated 1660 and investigating the stability of the East wall.

Bells

The churchwarden met with Chris Davies, Chairman of The Suffolk Guild of Bell Ringers on the 20th July 2020 when an initial inspection was performed, and the report including recommendations from the Guild forwarded to PCC members.

I am pleased to report that the recommended works were finally completed on 17th February 2022.

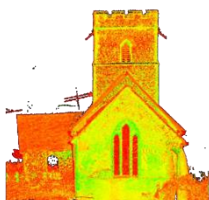
The smaller bell has not been taken off its frame or headstock but secured inside the bell chamber by the Guild members, the straps remain on the bell meaning no faculty had to be sought for the works.

The Guild did not charge us for their advice or works, in gratitude the PCC donated £100 to the Guild.

East wall

Following an Extraordinary PCC meeting on 25th November 2021, due to the concern over the deterioration of the East Wall, The Diocese, Building Control and Planning and Historic England were all informed and are regularly updated with progress.

The PCC instructed G. B. Geotechnics Limited, Cambridge to commence work monitoring the stability of the East wall. The initial inspection was carried out on 6th December 2021 with Moiré 'Tell-Tales' being attached the next day 7th December 2021 due to the immediate concern.



The next phase was to remove the shrubbery abutting the East gable wall directly on the boundary line of the church and the Old Rectory. A date of the 10th May 2022 to remove the shrubbery was agreed with the Old Rectory's owner then cancelled by the Rectory owner as the shrubbery was in flower.

The shrubbery was finally removed by Rev Eric and a couple of PCC members on 8th July 2022 (seen in the photo) so that a high definition 3D

laser dimensional scan survey of the chancel interior and exterior, map cracks and process data for base dimension and tilt, drawings and report could be performed.

On 22nd September 2022 following the final report from G. B. Geotechnics Limited the Diocese sent Edward Morton a Conservation Accredited Engineer from The Morton Partnership Ltd to inspect and report on the East Wall. In Edward Morton's report moving forward it is suggested, "...it is important to initially undertake two trial holes as this will give some greater knowledge and understanding particularly regarding the east wall. These should be excavated by hand down to the base of the foundation, one at the south end of the east wall and one to the north side of the north east buttress. Ideally, some approximate levels should be taken from the east wall down to the courtyard area of the Rectory. This will allow a much clearer understanding of impact, if any, of the slope on the stability of the east wall. At the same time, it would be quite useful through ladder access to assess the masonry at

high level to the east wall both internally and externally. This will hopefully provide better information about whether there is any voiding to the wall by tap testing, and also the stability of the internal masonry.... With the high level inspection and trial holes completed, it may be found necessary to undertake further investigations such as boreholes and then soil testing to understand its characteristics – however, I would only suggest this is undertaken after the trial holes are completed... I suggested they would potentially need a faculty for any trial holes, and obviously they will need to engage a Structural Engineer to inspect. Any Engineer appointed should be conservation accredited under the CARE scheme, administered jointly by the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Institution of Structural Engineers.'

2020 Quinquennial Completed works at the time of this report.

Bell hanging fixings – temporarily made safe by The Suffolk Guild of Bell Ringers.

Birds nests and debris removed from Belfry on 13th April 2022

Silence window repaired and smaller gauge chicken wire attached to prevent further invasion 13th April 2022

Oasis now kept in sealed bags

Interior church lighting – all bulbs have been changed to low energy bulbs and the motion sensor porch bulb has been replaced.

Removal of Vestry Screen and door due to woodworm (not historical – varnished plyboard)

Holes in chicken wire over barge boards on exterior South Porch - new chicken wire installed to prevent birds entering and nesting.

Fire extinguishers H2O and CO2 have been replaced with new

PAT Testing completed

Electrics and 5 year Electrical inspection completed



Churchyard: Following research on the maintenance of churchyards a zoned maintenance plan was drawn up in line with God's Acre and Suffolk and Norfolk Wildlife Trust advice.

The churchyard now has two major cut a year and in between these cuts it is left to grow wild to promote its flora and fauna with paths being cut in to allow access to graves as per churchyard rules.

On 10th May 2022 the churchwarden met with Cathy Smith of Suffolk Wildlife Trust to discuss the churchyard maintenance plan, feedback was extremely positive.

Rural Dean's Visitation

The visitation was performed on 31st March 2022

Church Inventory has been updated and now includes photographs of all items.

x1 hard copy in the church safe and further off-site digital copies with the Vicar and Church Warden

Churchyard Plan updated and Photographic Inventory of headstones and inscriptions completed.

x1 copy in the safe and further off -site digital copies with Vicar and Church Warden.

Safeguarding, Health and Safety and Fire Policies now in red folder in vestry.

Training

The Churchwarden has attended PCC Workshop Funding and Grants on 25th April 2022

2023 Priorities

The PCC's main priority in this section for the next year are:

- to improve the ability of the congregation/visitors to give contactless donations.
- to promote regular giving, possibly reintroduce the direct debit mandate to the community.
- To raise our profile with children and young adults
- to raise the number of volunteers willing to help us.
- Continue to record Moiré Tell Tales
- East wall maintenance and works

Finance

We have no income from any lettings/rentals.

The largest cost presently, remain the diocesan quota, which goes towards the ministry costs of the diocese (and pays for the salaried ministry of our clergy) the PCC supports this, and it must be remembered that without parish share payments we would not have Eric.

In March 2022 Eric invited Churchwarden's/Secretary's from each of the four parishes of the Benefice to discuss the Benefice Parish Share Allocation. The expectation is that parishes will make a pledge to pay a certain amount for the year, which is realistic and manageable.

After due discussion at the meeting, our sister parishes generously agreed to help us by agreeing to pay more. Also, noted was that we were likely to face a number of significant costs regarding the fabric of our church over the next year and into the future. However, as a Benefice all PCC's agreed to increase our support to the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich through the Benefice Parish Share for the year 2022.

Although we have many challenges ahead of us, the present outlook is one of positivity when reviewing our achievements over the last year. We are reintegrating with our community and in return some interest and support is slowly growing.

Our present financial situation it cannot be denied has been significantly assisted through regular service donations and support from our sister parishes, the engagement and extreme generosity of Marcia Blakenham through the Woodland Garden Event, the Roy Tricker event and the PCC's April Jumble sale and Christmas Bazaar.

With Eric's leadership and support alongside PCC members, friends of our church and our community our village's medieval Grade I listed building will hopefully remain for the future generations.

Financial Statement

Attached separately

