

Astwick Vale Benefice

Aynho, Croughton, Evenley, Farthinghoe
and Hinton-in-the-Hedges with Steane

www.astwickvalebenefice.org

BENEFICE PROFILE

December 2022



Welcome

The Astwick Vale Benefice welcomes your interest and potential application for the role of Rector.

We have had a vacancy since 1st September 2022 and the last time we were in Interregnum was 2018.

There is opportunity and challenge in our benefice and parishes. Above all we know we are not the finished product.

We wish for a rector with skills of leadership and management, community interest in a rural community, and who is excited at living in a wonderfully well-connected part of England. Someone on his/her own Ministry development path would have flexibility.

You will be welcomed by our congregations, village communities and all in the team are ready to support, help and grow together.

Mission

To worship and work together for God's purpose to the benefit of all in our communities.

Our Belief

We believe that the church should be at the centre of our lives and the communities in which we live.

There must always be a warm welcome at our services and in all our church activities.

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Overview of the Benefice

What We Are

Astwick Vale Benefice, which consists of the parishes and churches of Aynho, Croughton, Evenley, Farthinghoe and Hinton-in-the-Hedges with Steane, is situated at the most southerly end of the Peterborough Diocese within the Brackley Deanery.

How We See Ourselves

Each of the churches making up the Benefice has its own distinctive character and traditions, which we respect and for which we are thankful. We do, however, share our gifts and actively support one another as a team, but more could be done to enhance the feeling of a united Benefice rather than a collection of parishes. Our aim is to grow together. All of the churches are relatively close together – within a 5-mile triangle and getting round it is not a challenge.

Our Make Up

The whole character of the Benefice is that of rural communities, each containing a mix of retired and mainly middle-class working people with quite a few commuters to larger towns and home-workers interspersed with the farmers and landowners. The challenge this sort of community brings is very different from urban parishes, but across the Benefice there is a core of people willing to give whatever assistance the church and its incumbent requires.

Our Prayer

We pray that our new Incumbent will:

- Give us strong spiritual and practical leadership
- Have new ideas and want to develop them with us as the Ministry here develops
- Enjoy focusing on our young families and children whom we see as a priority
- Continue to serve an older generation in our churches and in their homes
- Be involved in our communities
- See us as a benefice who can support your own career and development

And enable us to:

- grow together both as God's family and as a Benefice
- share the love of Jesus within our respective parishes
- open to the support and encouragement of the Holy Spirit
- use our skills and talents in God's service throughout our Benefice
- veer left and right as success is achieved

Our Context

The successes of the past 20 years in promoting lay people into the ministry and their moving on to become clergy in assorted other parishes, has meant that our Benefice now retains a core team of two licensed readers and a retired clergy to come to the assistance of a new incumbent. It is our prayerful hope that the new Incumbent will encourage and grow a further team/pastoral ministry to serve the five parishes. One positive about the Covid years has been the need to rely on Lay Led services to keep the regular service pattern going – and a confidence has grown by those who have stepped up to lead. What success looks like in the next years is up to the new incumbent – learning and growing together will continue to be important. We want something new and we need some change again. It can be based on freshness and eagerness as well as on experience and sagacity.

Why – At This Time

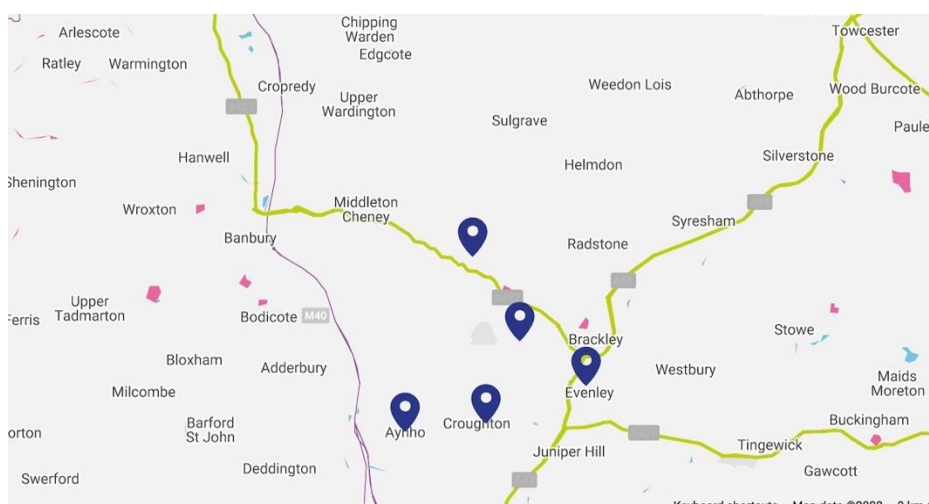
There is no doubt that we need reinvigoration at Benefice and Parish level. The Covid years have been a struggle. Church and community life has suffered and we are finding it challenging to get things going again. There are opportunities and it needs an invigorating active presence to lead us into them and find the inspiration and determination to re-establish what previous generations have had, and to which a succession of different and talented Rectors have brought to the benefice over the last 25 years.

Location

The Benefice sits in the very south of Northamptonshire where it abuts Oxfordshire to the south and west and Buckinghamshire to the east.

The Benefice is part of the Deanery of Brackley under the authority of the Archdeacon of Northampton. It consists of 5 close parishes in a 5-mile triangle located on the edge of the Cotswolds, which lie midway between Oxford, Northampton and Stratford upon Avon – on the M40 and good direct rail for London and Birmingham.

The rectory for the Benefice is situated in Aynho and further details are to be found in that parish's profile.



Whilst Brackley (population c16,000) is the closest town with local shopping including a bank, the main shopping centres are to be found in Banbury (8 miles west on the A422), Northampton (16 miles north on the A43), Oxford (14 miles south on the A43), Buckingham (8 miles east on the A422), with Milton Keynes (26 miles east on A422) and Stratford-on-Avon (26 miles north west on M40) within easy reach. They each have the standard supermarkets and a normal range of shops.

London and Birmingham are both about 65 miles away via either the M1 or the M40 with good train services from Banbury, Bicester and Milton Keynes taking just under the hour into London. Silverstone race track lies 6 miles up the A43 from Brackley and a number of personnel from the track and assorted racing teams reside in the villages.

Villages

The villages vary in size and make up:

- Aynho - has a population of 650
- Croughton - at which there is an US Air Force base – is of 1000

- Evenley - surrounding the most beautiful village green – is 550
- Farthinghoe - is about 400
- Hinton in the Hedges - is about 200

The detailed parish profiles will describe more.

What Happens Around here?

Unsurprisingly there is a lot of farming and in all the small towns some light industry. There are plenty of work opportunities in all sectors. Brackley is the centre of the F1 motor racing industry and therefore the spin offs into rest of the area are enormous. Silverstone race track is just down the road towards Northampton. Stratford and Oxford are equidistant for culture, whilst London and Birmingham offer everything within an hour's journey.

Pre Schools and Schools

Within the Benefice there are two primary schools: Croughton Church of England School (V.C.) with a roll of approximately 100 pupils, whilst Farthinghoe Junior School is much smaller with 36 pupils. Both are closely connected with their respective churches.

There is also a primary school in the village of Charlton, which although in a neighbouring parish has strong links with the villages in our Benefice, including a member of Aynho's church being on this school's governing board.

For the older children the two main secondary schools are Magdalene College School in Brackley and Chenderit School in Middleton Cheney.

As the Rectory is in Aynho which does not have its own primary school there is a choice of for applications to neighbouring Croughton and Charlton. At the latter there is an associated Pre School whilst in Croughton there is a really good nursery (Puddleducks) There are school buses provided for the school children of Aynho.

Healthcare

We are well provided for in terms of Health Centres and local GP services – Brackley, Banbury and Deddington. Dentists are very hard to come by on the NHS but there are a number of private practices in all the towns. Luckily, we fall under the hospital care of the Oxford University Hospitals Trust and can access all specialist care. The Horton Hospital in Banbury has its own A&E, maternity unit and a good range of services provided as a subset of Oxford. We are lucky. Care homes are located nearby and currently there is no association with the incumbency.

Incumbency Matters

Mission

To worship and work together for God's purpose to the benefit of all in our communities.

Development Aims

- Recover from the pandemic and lost opportunities
- The church must grow to be more prominent within the associated communities including:

- Greater connection with the community at large
 - Raising the church profile, working with a team, of the church in the community
 - Growing personal relationships outside the immediate church community
- Greater development for catering for families, young children and teenagers
 - Consider how to re-create Sunday schooling; 'Praise and Play' for pre-school and parents; review the Holiday Club given up in 2019 as local school provision (at a cost) is available only to some
 - Consider integration as a means of growth – core is the need to attract new members of the congregations
- Development of a ministry team, growing from the core of what is already present; encouraging lay leaders.
- Re-establishing pastoral care within the communities

Incumbent Profile

- Spiritual leader with wide churchmanship wanting to grow together
- Like a challenge and seek out opportunities
- Reinvigorate the Benefice and joint activity when sharing is key
- Want to have a role in schools
- Prepared to help and lead us into achieving our aims
- Team player with ability to delegate appropriately
- Personality to fit the rural Benefice and get involved with the community
- Represent the Benefice externally as a whole entity
- Take account internally within the Benefice of the local parish entities and identities
- Approachable, sociable, good listener, and outgoing, able to communicate at all levels and become part of the local village community.

Benefice Team

Currently in place in the Benefice (December 2022)

Reader	Carrie O'Regan (resides in Evenley)
Reader	Mayleng Chong (resides in Kings Sutton)
Retired Minister	Rev Hugh Warwick (resides in Croughton)
Retired Minister	Rev Terry Richards (resides in Croughton)

Financial Information

Total Benefice Parish Share for 2022: over £72,000
Benefice Expenses: Variable

Notes:

- Both these have been met in full by the individual parishes until the Covid years intervened. We are working our way back to 100%.
- The Parish Share is split according to an agreed Benefice formula and each Parish pays their portion directly to the Diocese. Shares between parishes are:

Aynho – 35%
Croughton – 20%
Evenley - 25%
Farthinghoe – 10%
Hinton – 10%

- The Rector's expenses are settled from a Benefice account. This account is also used to meet other expenditure related to running the Benefice. The account itself is funded by monthly contributions from the parishes based on the same percentage as their Parish share. The total monthly contribution is based upon a detailed budget which is reviewed annually to take account of widely changing circumstances as evidenced over the past 4 years.
- Further details of finance are contained in each Parish overview and full sets of accounts are available.

Service Pattern

Over the years we have had a regular service pattern which has been changed flexibly according to circumstances – the demands of the parishes, the availability of the Incumbent, the availability of other members of the Ministry Team, and the willingness of the Lay Leaders.

There is then at least one communion service in the parish churches on the 1st, 2nd and 4th Sundays. Travelling means the Incumbent can conduct a 9.30 and an 11am service on those Sundays.

Benefice Holy Communion services (BCP) on rotation each 3rd and 5th Sunday in the month with no other parish service competing on those days.

Morning worship/prayers and Evening Prayers are also conducted. Currently we are not using 1662 or traditional service formats.

(During the vacancy we have an adjusted schedule taking into account the availability of retired clergy and lay readers).

Home prayer groups and Bible Study courses are organised during the year within parishes.

Website and Social Media

We have recently created a new website for the benefice, there is more to add, but currently it provides information on the churches, our Pews News (created each week) and the services. This is particularly important during the interregnum as our pattern has changed.

We also have facebook and instagram accounts.

www.astwickvalebenefice.org

Aynho

The Parish of Aynho - St Michael's Church



Population	:	651
Electoral Role	:	43
Average Sunday Attendance	:	27
Churchwardens	:	Andrew Bellamy & Kathy White

Financial Information (2021)

Total Regular Income	£21,292
Transfer from Aynho School Trust Fund	£10,000
Total Regular Expense	£27,122
Including part Parish Share	£15,000
Total General Reserves	£21,396
Total Restricted Reserves	£37,112

Weekday activities:

- The Church is open every day for private prayer.

- There is a children's table (resource) area available at the back of the church for use by families and toddlers.
- Lent course and autumn bible study groups,
- Bell ringing practice twice a month.

The Church:

St Michael's is a Grade 1 listed building having a 14th century tower which is all that remains of the original church built in the reign of Edward III. Following the Civil War which had caused severe damage, the main body of the church was demolished in 1723 and rebuilt in a form of Baroque style reflecting the adjacent Aynhoe Park House. The architect was Edward Wing an Aynho carpenter who had talents beyond his trade. The church attracts visitors worldwide and is featured in Simon Jenkins book 'England's Thousand Best Churches' which many people have with them during their visit. Next year (2023) is the tercentenary of the new build – something to celebrate!

The interior is untypical of an English village church there being no chancel and the body of the church has four distinctive blocks of box pews and a gallery at the west end. The windows are predominantly grisaille glass with work by Willement 1857 and Kempe 1900c. There are eight bells regularly rung by a Benefice band of ringers and a carillon playing different tunes four times a day.

A millennium project brought a water supply into the building which facilitated the provision of a small kitchen and toilet facility. The repositioning of the font to the heart of the church and the removal of some pews has created an area at the rear of the church for fellowship and refreshment at the end of services. The church is well kept by a band of volunteer cleaners. A Quinquennial Survey was carried out in November 2021 and a rolling programme of repairs will continue to the glass leaded windows and a programme will be put in place to repair the roof in stages. The heating system is currently under review by engineers to replace the oil based boiler and wet heating system with an air source heat pump, a dry system, and some under pew heating - all for the zero carbon climate challenge. The churchyard remains open and is maintained by both a volunteer gardener and a contractor for grass cutting.

Aynho supports the only church choir in the Benefice.

The church community shares a common aspiration to bring the wider population into the church family through energetic leadership and linked programmes of worship, perhaps at times in a less formal setting. In 2022 we have begun a cultural programme of different concerts which have been well supported. Easter, Christmas, Harvest and Remembrance services are well attended and provide an opportunity to have fellowship with the village as a whole. Our Harvest Festival service involves all the groups in the village in decorating a window and brings in contributions from the local farming community; all the gifts go to Brackley Foodbank.



During the last 4 years we have worked hard to make sure St Michael's Church has remained open for normal services. Covid disrupted the service pattern but we returned to safe services once the national restrictions were lifted. We found parishioners did not take to the on-line offering and much preferred the community gathering for services. Each month we continue to offer two Holy Communion services in contemporary form led by the Rector, one Morning Worship service (Lay Led by one of the 3 volunteers). On the third and fifth Sundays in the month parishioners join the central Benefice services in one or other of the villages.

Parish Overview:

The recorded existence of the village dates back to the time of Edward the Confessor. Around 1043 the land passed through various English landed families until Aynhoe Park House and estate were bought by Richard Cartwright a barrister of the Inner Temple in 1615. Since the Cartwright family had to sell their land and houses in the mid-20th century Aynhoe Park has had one existence as pensioner apartments and another as an events venue of some renown. It has recently been purchased by an American company, Restoration Hardware, who intend to have an 80 cover Restaurant, a Tea Room, Pizza outlet and Juice Bar in addition to their main business of filling houses with all sorts of interiors!

With the closure of the village school in the 1990s the primary aged children attend Newbottle and Charlton School with the St Michael's PCC having the right to appoint two foundation governors. The older children attend Magdalene College School in Brackley. Both schools have good Ofsted ratings.

The make-up of the population from traditional local people to newcomers has continued over the decades but the next village survey will show an increase in the rate of change, some of it fuelled by Covid. The village now has a large generation of younger parents and 60 children from primary age down to the new born. This gives added reason for the church to focus more on this group, provide for them, support them and help them as they grow into the community. It also means that we need to do more in the main Church of England primary school at Charlton in which most of these children attend or will attend because this currently falls under the parish of Kings Sutton next door. As a result, we miss the connection between the children and the key activities involving the church – or our church. Extra effort is needed to try and make more of this indirect connection.



The village has many interest groups including gardening club, history society, writers' group, walking group, WI and a very active recreation association. The church organises the summer fete which brings us together with the wider community who give help and support, although this was curtailed by Covid and we hope to bring it back in 2023. In order to try and fill the gap in income, we

have introduced a series of concerts, held in the Church during 2022 and these are well supported by people from both within the village and the surrounding area.

A group of eight almshouses is managed by a community charity which includes the Rector and Churchwardens as Trustees.



The village is well led by the Parish Council. It has a pub and restaurant in its Cartwright Hotel. There are no shops but Co-ops are in all adjacent villages – and of course the village has easy access to Banbury, Brackley and Oxford/Milton Keynes. Just off the M40, road access is good everywhere and the rail runs through both Bicester and Banbury heading for London and for Birmingham respectively.

The Rectory

The Benefice rectory is located in Aynho and is approached through a stone arch on the South side of the village centre about 100m back from the main road.



Its southerly aspect gives delightful views of the church tower with a pleasant walled garden on two sides.

The house is sympathetically built of stone constructed in 1984 with ample parking space at the front including a large carport in one corner. Being centrally located it is very convenient for the church and the village hall.

The property has flexible accommodation. On the ground floor there is a good size double aspect sitting room, dining room, kitchen and a utility leading to a good sized room. The latter was originally a converted garage with a sprung floor and roof access overhead; it has been used in various ways both privately and in support of parish activity by previous incumbents. Adjacent to the front door is a good-sized office and a downstairs toilet leading off the hallway.

The first floor has four bedrooms and a separate bathroom, shower room and toilet. Leading off the landing is a large walk-in boarded loft. The property has gas central heating.



The walled garden is mainly laid to lawn with fruit trees on one side. Being southerly aspect, it enjoys a good level of sunshine enhancing the delightful views of the church. There are two side gates giving separate access to the rear of the property.

Croughton

The Parish of Croughton – All Saints Church



Population	:	1000 approx, although the American RAF base falls within the civil parish boundary and would increase the population to 1200
Electoral Role	:	17
Average Sunday Attendance	:	12
Churchwardens	:	Angie Robbins

Financial Information (2021)

Total Regular Income	£6,836
Total Regular Expense	£4,581
Including Parish Share & Benefice Expenses	£14,573
	£720
Total General Reserves	£12,812
Total Restricted Reserves	£7,874

The Church:

All Saints Church is a beautiful ancient and ageless church, enhanced by medieval wall paintings,

peaceful and steeped in prayer and welcoming Christian focus for the whole village.

All saints church is recorded in Simon Jenkin's book of *England's Thousand Churches, Northamptonshire's 100 Best Churches* and is famous for its extensive medieval wall paintings, ancient wooden pews with individual and unique carved pew ends, a Ninian Comper designed East window and a peal of five bells. Many visit to explore the history of the building.

With the exception of the interment of ashes, the graveyard is now closed with burials taking place in the cemetery on the outskirts of the village. The Village War Memorial is situated in the Churchyard. All Saints Church is a small warm (heated by a new electric heating system) Village Church sharing a close relationship with Croughton All Saints C of E school. The school makes educational visits to the church and regularly worships in the church on such occasions as Harvest Festival, Christmas, Remembrance Day and a Leavers Service.

The quinquennial survey was carried out in 2021.



Parish

Overview:

The village is spread along the Main Street, a fairly busy B road. Croughton All Saints C of E school, is a thriving primary school of over 100 pupils which achieved a good Ofsted rating, and attracts children from the RAF base, local villages, and Brackley. Senior pupils attend schools in Brackley, Banbury or Buckingham.

There is a Pre-School group in the Village Hall and closely linked to the School and a private nursery. There is a village Co-Op store, industrial estate providing some local employment. A large Village Hall alongside the sports grounds and children's play area which is now home to

many village activities and clubs as well as available for lettings.

There is a public house (The Black Bird), and village Reading Room which has recently been refurbished, there is a Tea Room and is used for meetings and private functions. To the East of the village is RAF Croughton, an American airbase that is self-sufficient with which we have a close relationship.

Activities:

Home Lent Bible Groups; 49 Club; Open Church with Pimms and Historic Talks; Christingle; School Mock Wedding; (Pre-Covid Holiday Club; Pizza Praise; Pancake Praise; Fete; Concert and Cheese and Wine).

The small regular worshipping congregation does not represent the village's love for their church and willingness to maintain and support the building as needs arise.

The church congregation is small but faithful, worship is CW Holy Communion on the second Sunday of the Month and on the fourth Sunday we have Morning Prayer with rotating Benefice Services.

Evenley

The Parish of Evenley - St George's Church



Population	:	550
Electoral Role	:	34
Average Sunday Attendance	:	20
Churchwardens	:	Jose Golding

Financial Information (2021):

Total Regular Income:	£20,967
Total Regular Expense:	£18,557
Including Parish Share (Part)	£12,000
Total General Reserves:	£34,454
Total Restricted Reserves:	£28,284

The Church:

The present St. George's Church is a Victorian building by the architect Woodyer and dates from 1864. It occupies the site of a medieval building that was taken down in the 1850s and is built to the same ground plan. The fabric is in good order. A sound system and loop have been installed. Over the past 20 years we have carried out general repairs, refurbishment of the clock, path and work to the tower and shingle spire.

The Church is well supported by the village with many people involved in its care and upkeep. Our regular congregation tends to be an ageing one. Festive services at Christmas, Easter and other occasions are well supported. The service on the 3rd Sunday of each month is led by a lay team.

Weekday Activities:

The Church is keen to restart some of the activities we have had in the past, these include a house group, which met weekly during Lent and at other festival times.

A monthly home communion used to run on a Monday morning – usually attended by 10 people, some of whom found it difficult to attend Sunday services.

We enjoy raising funds for the church and various charities by organising concert's, safari suppers, cream teas, Easter Coffee, Harvest Lunch in the village Hall, Christmas mulled wine and carol singing around the village. This January we had a coffee morning to celebrate Epiphany with the children decorating crowns and stars.

We would like to try and encourage children to come to church, in the past we had an animal blessing service, which was extremely popular.

Pre-covid we enjoyed getting together with the Benefice for special occasions eg:- Pancake Day, Stir up Sunday, Children's Pizza Praise, Taize Service, The Benefice Choir and Weekly morning prayer.



Parish Overview:

The village of Evenley covers some 300 acres and has a population of over 550 people. It lies close to Brackley and has a coffee shop, farm shop, a pub, The Red Lion, a village hall and a central village green with a cricket square. During the summer months cricket plays an important part in the village. A monthly soup lunch in the village hall is a good meeting place for people. A fete was held in the church grounds this year 2022 and raised £1,945.

There is a mix of housing in the village, old and new, small and large, owned and rented. The population is mixed with some people having lived in the village for many years and there are several families with children.

Life on and around the village :-



Farthinghoe

The Parish of Farthinghoe – St Michael & All Angels Church



Population	:	413
Electoral Role	:	17
Average Sunday Attendance	:	10 - 12
Churchwardens	:	Lisa Wenmouth

Financial Information – Year to 31st December 2021 :-

Total Regular Income:	£6,141
Total Regular Expense:	£5,380
Inc (part) Parish Share:	£2,000*
Total General Reserves:	£6,785
Total Fabric Account:	£27,397

* Due to the pandemic we only part paid our parish share in 2021. To date in 2022 we have paid £5,000 of £7,200.

Regular activities:

Monthly coffee morning in vestry

The Church:

The Church of St. Michael & All Angels, Farthinghoe dates from the 12th century. The fabric is in good order and we recently had to replace the South Aisle Roof due to lead theft.

We have a good organ and a regular organist and we have the largest vestry in the benefice! We have regular churchyard days and work hard to try and do the urgent items on the Quinquennial, which is just coming due to be done again.

Our clock is a rare one handed one, made in the nearby village of Chacombe and was refurbished in the last 10 years and the workings made visible from the back of the church.

**Services:**

Services are attended by small, but committed, congregations and we work to try and increase attendance by the villagers.

Christmas, Easter and Remembrance Sunday services are well attended but we would love to find ways to encourage more people to join us for our other services.

Once a month we have a morning said service, a morning family service and Evensong.

Fundraising:

Our main fundraising each year is our church fete, which generates in excess of £1,400 to our general fund.

In addition, we have a monthly coffee morning with a raffle, when we make use of our large vestry. The coffee morning is always well attended and by people who are not usually part of our congregation. Up to July 2022, this has generated £656.

Parish Overview:

The village of Farthinghoe is the most northerly of the five parishes. It has a population of approximately 413 people.

The village straddles the A422 running from Brackley to Banbury, with a bus service between the two towns.

The village is mixed in housing and population and there is a popular County Primary School. There is also a village hall which the church can use at a substantially reduced rate, or free of charge, depending on the activity

The school has recently appointed a new Headteacher and we hope this is an opportunity to work with her to form greater links. In fact, generally, the church, village hall and school are keen to work together more closely.

We have a Playpark for the children, recently upgraded.

There is a pub, the Fox, and Limes Farm Tea Room, as well as KPH Tyres, a garage for repairs, tyres and MOTs.

There are other informal village groups in the village e.g., Book Club and the village hall hosts a monthly 'Books and Bakes'.

Church Piece Allotments Trust:

Our church is supported by an ancient charity called the Church Piece Allotments Trust, the aim of which is to support our church through the management of allotments situated within the village – these are located between Charlton Way and the Main Road.

Rents are collected each year and currently stand at £12 per year.

In the past, a portion of the allotment land was sold to enable social housing to be built.

The funds raised from the sale of that land are invested separately and the money generated from those investments is able to be used with the approval of the Charity's trustees to assist with the upkeep of the Church.

Hinton-in-the-Hedges

Holy Trinity, Hinton-in-the-Hedges & St Peters, Steane



Population	:	196 (101Male, 95 female) in 82 dwellings, a further 26 in Steane
Electoral Role	:	17
Average Sunday Attendance	:	10 - 15
Churchwardens	:	Sam Mains and Vacancy

Financial Information (2021):

Total Regular Income:	£4,854
Total Regular Expense:	£3,870
Including Parish Share:	£8,251
& Rectors Expenses:	
Total General Reserves:	£44,830
Total Restricted Reserves:	£3,500

Weekday activities: Occasional Home Communion

The Church:

There has been a Church in Hinton since Saxon times with Rectors being identified from Sir Richard de Hynton in 1275 and a Church at Steane from the 13th. century united with Hinton since 1752 following its rebuilding in 1620.

The parish church in Hinton is both charming and interesting. The bulk of the building is 12th century on a Saxon base. The rood screen and staircase to its loft are still in place, there are two effigies and some excellent memorial plaques including a 15th century Latin one. The three bells are 15th and 17th century and were re-hung as part of the millennium celebrations. Both church and churchyard are well-kept with no major problems pending.

All the items in the penultimate quinquennial have been actioned and three quarters of the roof tiles have just been replaced, following a warranty claim for defective tiles from a previous repair; there is a great fondness for the building even from non-churchgoers and any fund-raising for its upkeep is very well supported. A builder has been appointed to action the few relatively minor repairs mentioned as necessary in the last quinquennial and the work will be completed as soon as he is free.

As to be expected, the congregation is an aging one. The Christmas Carol Service is always well-attended; Easter Christmas, Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday reasonably so. Services are warm and informal; there is plenty of laughter. A wide variety of services is liked, from the evangelical and liberal to the occasional 1662 (although not everyone likes the changes to traditional words that Common Worship has introduced).

With no village hall, the church is often used to hold village 'social' events, with productions of plays, concerts and, the (civil) Annual Village Meeting being held there.



Steane Church was rebuilt in 1620 and houses the ornate, mainly baroque, memorials to the Crewe family who owned the estate. Lord Crewe became the Bishop of Durham whilst keeping the estate at Steane. There is no churchyard at Steane and the church stands in the gardens of Steane Park with access over the long drive up to the main house. Although the church sits in the park it is not owned by the park, although the current residents show a very keen interest in the church and its maintenance. The Park is in the process of being sold, completion said to be in the coming months; the new owner will be contacted as soon as is thought appropriate after then.

There is an obligation to hold six services a year at Steane, but as there is no power there, these are held as Evensong in the summer months with guest speakers, ranging from the lay readers to the Bishop of Peterborough. The services are usually followed by refreshments, in the superb gardens of the park when the weather allows, and for the past few years a very popular Songs of Praise Service has been held followed by a BBQ. Also very popular is the periodic holding of the Christmas Eve midnight communion at Steane lit by candles (curtailed by COVID)

We know that any parish priest would be happy at Hinton with Steane, because of the informality, feel-good atmosphere and friendliness of the village.

Parish Overview:

Hinton-in-the-Hedges is a quiet village on the edge of Brackley, first mentioned in the Domesday Book.

The village does not have enough voters to have a Parish Council, so there is an Annual Village Meeting at which a village chairman is elected - to represent the village to the district and county - and at that meeting an assortment of village issues have a chance to be discussed.

It has a lively pub, The Crewe Arms, a free house providing pub food Tuesday to Saturday evenings and a roast on Sunday with a variety of beer and providing, with the Church, the focal point of the village. A church service has been held in the pub in the past, to bring the church out into the community and the PCC regularly meets in the pub back room.

There are no shops, schools or village hall.

There are livery stables on two farms and a pet-bedding packaging plant on the third farm. Four small modern cul-de-sac estates (10, 7, 5 and 4 houses) lie between the 17th. century manor house and Old Rectory, 1678, (occupied by the Church Warden and his family) farmhouses, thatched labourers' cottages, two alms houses, privatised council houses and in-fill homes (about 82 homes altogether) – a wide variety of dwellings in a small village of about 200 souls. Property values are high.

A separate trust manages the Norris Playing Field in the village and there is a separate cricket field, but unfortunately the team fell a victim of the COVID restrictions and has not resumed (yet) since lockdowns.

There are two alms-houses administered by trustees, which currently provide housing for two village 'children' who wish to remain and work in the village but could not afford to buy.

An ex-second world war airfield lies to the north-west of the village – part of it being in the parish. The airfield is now used for light aircraft, a parachute club and a gliding centre.

Just under half the home-owners farm, work from home or are retired. The remainder work in local towns or further afield, including London commuting. Around 24% are over 65s

A slight rise in child/teenage population as new houses are built has been a welcome feature of the last ten years. No social problems are identified, and there is a feeling of social cohesion in the village that might prevent it. (In other words, if a child is felt to be 'straying', his or her parents would be told).

The village is traditional and middle-class in outlook and nature. It is known as type 1 in the ACORN classification. There are no ethnic minorities and prosperous in general, so there seems to be no social divisions, which make it possible for new villagers to be easily assimilated.

Steane is a small hamlet connected to Hinton by a gated road and straddling the A422. It consists of two main housing clusters, one each side of the main road. The one across the road from Hinton centres around Steane Park, a mini-stately home with the church of St. Peter's in its grounds as described above.