

The Bride Valley and Chesil Benefice



Chesil Beach towards Weymouth and Portland
from the top of Abbotsbury Hill

© MARGARET HIGHAM



Abbotsbury



Burton Bradstock



Langton Herring



Littlebredy



Litton Cheney



Long Bredy



Portesham



Puncknowle



Shipton Gorge



Swyre

Welcome from the Bishop of Sherborne



I cannot deny that rural ministry today is often both challenging and hard work, however in Dorset we try and make it also a joy and a delight. In recent years significant changes have been made in the way clergy are supported and encouraged, leading to a greater sense of collegiality in our rural areas.

The Lyme Bay deanery, in which the Bride Valley and Chesil Benefice is situated, seeks to be a supportive place bringing together the rural clergy with those in the neighbouring seaside towns. There will be a warm welcome amongst this clergy group for whoever comes to this benefice. This is an important appointment as the Bride Valley benefice has recently merged with three adjacent parishes along the Chesil beach. This also means that the incumbent will join a supportive team of lay and ordained leaders, including a House for Duty priest based in Portesham and an Associate Priest already offering ministry across the Bride Valley. We therefore seek a visionary, collaborative leader who will help the new benefice work together in new and creative ways, to serve a large rural area between the sea and the main road between Bridport and Dorchester. This really is a special part of Dorset and these rural parishes are looking for someone to come and love them and lead them on into a new phase of their life together. They are looking for an incumbent to come amongst them and settle for a good while. Both benefices have had challenges in the past, two former incumbents in the Bride Valley died in post, and the previous incumbent moved after a short time to be closer to family. There is therefore much resilience and care within the churches which is a significant strength. The last incumbent did a great deal in a short time to encourage

lay participation and to train up lay leaders. In the diocese there is a commitment to encourage the development of Lay Ministry and there are local programmes of training to develop Lay Pastoral Assistants and Lay Worship Leaders and these are proving to be successful particularly in our rural benefices. The ongoing ministry of clergy who come to retire amongst us is also much valued.

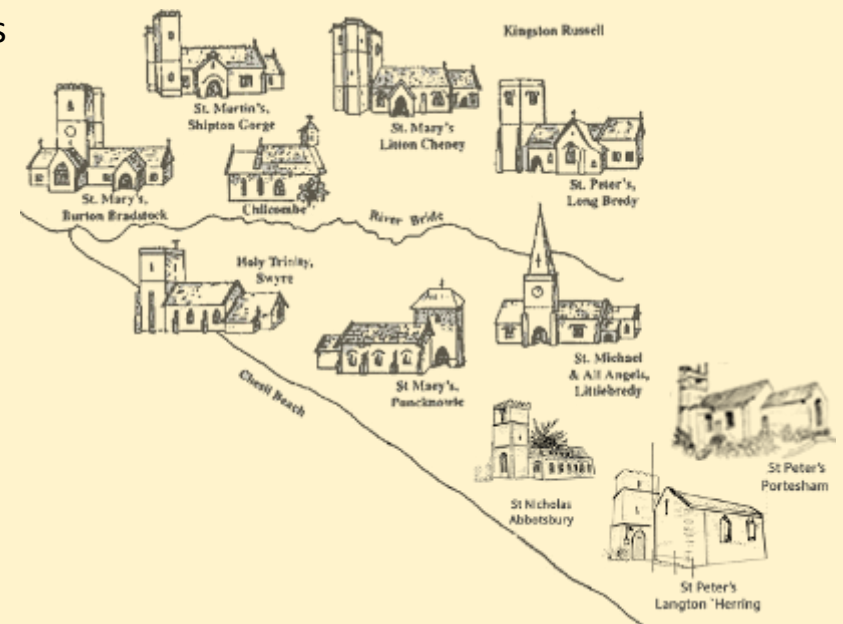
There are plenty of opportunities here for outreach to the visitor, second home owner, and resident alike, including to young people and families and through the schools. A new pioneer priest with an emphasis on the Arts has recently been appointed in Bridport and the coastal area designated as a diocesan pilot project for our new vision and strategy, with the hope of additional resource around missing generations in the next few years.

The parishes here enjoy beautiful rural countryside yet are within easy reach of Bridport, Weymouth and the rest of the Jurassic Coast. Anyone coming here would have to enjoy the rural life, there is a great deal of travel to be undertaken between churches and some of the lanes are very narrow. There are a significant number of scattered farms and hamlets in between the villages, however there is much life within each of the villages and plenty to join in with.

Should you wish to know more about this vacancy and ministering here in West Dorset please do not hesitate to contact Archdeacon Penny Sayer (adsherborne@salisbury.anglican.org) or the Rural Dean, the Revd Canon David Baldwin (revdavidbaldwin@gmail.com). We offer great opportunities, wonderful countryside, supportive colleagues and some deeply spiritual places of worship and retreat.

Bishop Karen

The Bride Valley and Chesil Benefice, part of the Lyme Bay Deanery, is set within an area of outstanding natural beauty, inland from the Dorset Jurassic Coast. The Benefice comprises ten rural parishes, located within the valley of the River Bride and along Chesil Beach. The county town of Dorchester lies to the east and the bustling and active market town of Bridport to the west (www.bridportandwestbay.co.uk). Weymouth and Portland are easily accessible, and the towns of Sherborne and Yeovil are 25 miles to the north. This is a beautiful and peaceful place in which to live and work. Not all its residents are equally fortunate, however, and there are areas with significant levels of social and economic deprivation in terms of barriers to housing and essential services.



The Benefice (cont)

Our Benefice comprises ten parishes and twelve churches (as there are chapels at Chilcombe and Corton). All the churches are attractive and contain features of interest, with styles ranging from fine architecture to the simplicity of small but intimate churches. There is one Methodist church within the Benefice. Rotas of volunteers enable all the churches to be open each day.

Our last Rector, owing to family commitments, decided to move closer to her family when the opportunity arose. Over the last 4 years she had encouraged us with new patterns and Fresh Expressions which fitted into our more formal styles.

We are seeking a parish priest to continue to help us explore where God is leading us and to understand together what it means to be rural parish churches in the 2020s and beyond.

The **Bride Valley and Chesil Benefice Council** meets on alternative months and is chaired by the incumbent. A member of each PCC attends and it is a forum for discussion of each church's news and events. We look forward to future collaboration across the enlarged benefice. A **Benefice administrator** is employed to work alongside the incumbent and there is a **safeguarding officer**.



Toward Lyme Regis from the
cliffs at Burton Bradstock

The Ministry Team

The Reverend Margaret Preuss-Higham

Margaret came to the priesthood late in life and following training at Sarum College was ordained at Salisbury Cathedral in 2010. Margaret worked as a self-supporting associate priest in the Bridport team ministry leaving in 2015 when she took up the post of house for duty for the churches of Abbotsbury, Portesham and Langton Herring. Born in Bridport, she worked as a hairdresser until March 2020 when she took up the diocesan post as the rural field officer in Sherbourne Archdeaconry, a role which involved engagement with rural churches, assisting them in exploring new ways of engaging with the wider community and wider use of the building. Margaret has a passion for rural churches, understands the difficulties they experience and enjoys exploring new ways to reach out and engage in the communities where they are. Margaret enjoys photography as a hobby. She is looking forward to welcoming and working and sharing the gospel with the new rector.



The Reverend Liz Howlett

Liz Howlett was licensed as an Associate Priest in the Bride Valley Benefice in April 2020, just as the first lockdown started. She had previously worked in the Birmingham diocese for over 14 years as Bishop's Adviser for Lay Adult Education and Training. For many years Liz had been coming to stay as a visitor at the Othona Community on the Coast Road outside Burton Bradstock and had felt increasingly drawn to living in a community setting. She was delighted when the opportunity arose to live and work fulltime at Othona back in 2019 and she enjoys the spiritual combination of Othona and the local churches. Liz is looking forward to the development of the new Bride Valley and Chesil Benefice.



The Reverend Ryder Rogers

Rev Ryder Rogers has been a clergyman for 55yrs - 17 of which were 'church planting' in the UK and then Albania, and now 18yrs ministering in the Bride Valley. Though officially 'retired' (something he spells as 're-tired') he continues to minister monthly on three Sundays, a midweek communion, as well as recording a telephone service. Ryder has just had his PTO License renewed by the bishop for a further 3yrs and (despite a stroke) sees himself as 'a willing workhorse'. He and his wife, Heather, share in 'Open the Book' in Thorner's School, supervise the Valley Tot's Time, and lead a 'Life Group' in Burton. As evangelicals Ryder and Heather are passionate about teaching God's Word and sharing the gospel so that people might know and follow Jesus personally.



James Webster LLM

Involved in church life since childhood James was eventually licenced as a Reader (LLM) into the Birmingham Diocese in 2000. Towards the end of a working career in his own medium sized hotel design practice, James located to the Bride Valley with his wife in 2006. He is fully integrated into the community and is the proud holder of a Shipton Gorge Good Egg award, for service to the village. He continues his interest as an accomplished artist undertaking commissions and supporting the Burton Bradstock Art Exhibition. James leads worship across the Benefice, usually three Sundays a month and often multiple services on a Sunday. He is also involved in funeral ministry locally. Living in Shipton Gorge, he frequently leads the special 'services' there, supports those who require Home Communion and leads Open the Book at Thorners School. While James is retiring at Easter 2024, his experience will be a great support to a new incumbent.



The Ministry Team (cont)

LWL Vicky Thomas

Vicky has a background in Education and recently retired after 11 years as Foundation Governor at Burton Bradstock school but she continues as Chair of the Chaplaincy Committee and being involved with Open the Book at the school. Vicky is a Lay Worship Leader and enjoys leading worship in the different churches including breakfast and café churches. A member of Litton Cheney PCC and Vice-Chair of the Benefice Council, she is looking forward to welcoming and working alongside the new incumbent.



LWL Paul Cheater

Paul Cheater was a teacher for 40 years before morphing into an educational consultant. After he retired from full-time teaching he was the lay chaplain at Milton Abbey School from 2012 to 2015. In addition to his rôle as one of the Bride Valley's three lay worship leaders, Paul is the organist and choirmaster at St Mary's church in Litton Cheney and often plays the organ at other Bride Valley churches and beyond. Paul is married to Diana, also a former teacher, and they have three grown-up children, two of whom live and work in London and one in Kenya. Paul's passion is music and his other interests include reading, writing, travelling, and cars of the 1950s and 60s.



LWL Heather Goffee

Heather has been a Lay Worship Leader for 3 years, regularly leading Sunday church services throughout the valley. She's also part of the Open the Book team which leads school assemblies at Thorner's on Wednesday mornings. Having been a governor at this school for a number of years she is currently Vice Chair, and also chairs the Communication and Ethos Committee. Heather is a leader of 'Big Q Church', an after school club jointly run with the school. Set up over a year ago this has proved popular, is well embedded and fully supported by the school. Heather also leads the monthly meeting of the Julian Group (Christian meditation and contemplative prayer) which is held at Swyre church.



LWL Diana Ludlow

Diana has lived in Langton Herring and Portesham for 50 years and has been widowed for 15 years. She was commissioned as a Lay Worship Leader by Bishop Karen in November 2022. She has been taking a Morning Praise service in Portesham on one Sunday a month. She has also occasionally taken communion to those house bound in the parish. She is an ardent fundraiser and trustee of the Home of Devenish. She is available to help Margaret in the parish.



Towards Burton
Bradstock and Lyme

Hive Beach at Burton Bradstock

Our Vision

To be open and accessible to all generations

**To continue to strengthen relationships between
congregations sharing resources and ideas**

**To develop new and existing lay leaders for mission, ministry
and worship**

To be more integrated and relevant to our communities

**To explore new forms of worship in our communities alongside
much loved traditional worship**



Our Mission

The creation of this Benefice on 1st November 2023 creates a particular need for us to explore ways in which we can share the gospel collaboratively. We can think of no better way of expressing this than the infographic above which sets out The Diocese of Salisbury's Vision - Making Jesus Known. Within our Parishes of the Bride Valley and Chesil churches we believe we are called by God to praise him, to proclaim His love and word and purpose and to serve him.

We will:

- ♦ **Meet to worship and praise God.**
- ♦ **Help one another through study of God's word and prayer to deepen our love and knowledge of God.**
- ♦ **Be welcoming and inclusive to all.**
- ♦ **Support all those in need through support for charities both locally and further afield.**
- ♦ **Testify to God's love for all His creation, through acts of care and prayer for all.**
- ♦ **Develop our sense of identity and working together while honouring the individuality of our parishes and character of our churches.**
- ♦ **Engage more families and children in the church and community – some resources may be available to employ a Children, Families and Schools Worker.**

Challenges

- ◆ To develop a supportive mission and ministry to enable mutual flourishing across the Benefice
- ◆ Encouraging families and children that church is not such a daunting place.
- ◆ Core members of the Church Communities are ageing, but there are many in the 30-60 age group we're keen to engage with – especially those showing an interest in church life.
- ◆ There is a small number of volunteers, with challenges around the number of churchwardens and PCC members.
- ◆ In common with many rural parishes, all our parishes have seen falling congregations in traditional worship but some encouraging signs in the development of Fresh Expressions.
- ◆ The increasing costs when income is reducing.

Parish and Community Communications

- ◆ A Church near You
- ◆ Village Websites
- ◆ Facebook/WhatsApp Groups (eg <https://www.facebook.com/APLBEN>)
- ◆ A Telephone Service (local code) originally weekly but now provided two or three times a month
- ◆ The weekly Source to Sea news and worship resource used in all the churches and widely circulated
- ◆ The monthly Bride Valley News delivered to every house in the Bride Valley
- ◆ A Chesil Magazine, produced at the eastern end of the Benefice
- ◆ Welcome packs for new residents



Life events

8 weddings are planned for 2024; 3 baptisms, 22 funerals/services of thanksgiving and 8 burial of ashes took place in 2023



Open the Book at Burton Bradstock School



Christingle at Portesham



Litton Cheney choir



Pet service celebrating St Francis



School visit



Chilcombe Chapel



Abbotsbury bellringers



Christmas joy!



Beaver group visit



Easter Sunrise Service at Hive Beach



Good Samaritans at Big Q



Some of Swyre's Garden Angels



Baptism at Long Bredy



Live Nativity at Long Bredy



Celebrating the Coronation



Remembrance at Portesham



Maggie the donkey on Palm Sunday



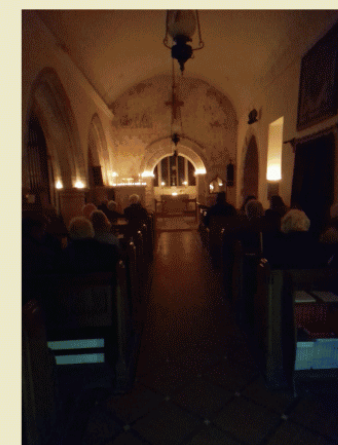
Tots Time at Burton Bradstock



Breakfast Church at Shipton Gorge



Lunch after midweek Holy Communion



Candlemas at Puncknowle



Burton Bradstock

Burton Bradstock where the current rectory* is situated is a lively and very active coastal village with a population of 950, a Post Office, a library, a village hall, 2 pubs, a hotel, a beach front restaurant, a shop, fuel station, & garage with car sales and maintenance. There are many holiday homes and 3 caravan parks. A regular daily bus service runs through the village between Lyme Regis, Axminster and Weymouth.

There is a week-long Music Festival (involving internationally renowned musicians) held in Church, a Church Fete, and a separate Village Fete. The active Village Society and the Village Hall Committee organise a Flower and Produce Show, quizzes, evening lectures, film shows, and an annual coach trip. Classes in the Village Hall include bridge club, flower arranging, Pilates and art.

There is Parish Council with a team of volunteers who care for the village. Other organisations include: the WI, a men's group, the Burton Players, and short mat bowls.

St Mary's Church has an Electoral roll of 76 and 54 Church members. Our Parish Share has always been paid in full and is currently £28,437.

There is a Life Group, a monthly Midweek Holy Communion followed by lunch, coffee mornings and cream teas in both the church and churchyard. Our Christian weekly Tot's Time (term time) is held in the church/churchyard with a regular attendance of about 10. At Christmas there is a Carol Service, a Crib Service, a Christingle Service and Carol Singing around the village.

Open-air services, prompted by the pandemic, have taken place and continue, including an Easter Sunrise Service with Holy Communion on the beach.

Strong finances have enabled recent internal work to form a kitchenette for hot drinks and light meals, a café seating area and disabled WC. The PCC is currently considering further work on this "Welcome Project".

There is a small Chapel of Ease situated in the garden of **Chilcombe** House about 5 miles from Burton where regular services are held from April to October

Further village information can be found at www.burtonbradstockvillage.org.

*The rectory will be the initial residence of the new Rector, but work is already underway with the Diocese and, in discussion with the new incumbent, it is hoped a more modern property may be found within a reasonable timescale.



Abbotsbury

Abbotsbury village has a population of just over 500 and is part of the Ilchester Estate. Because of that it retains its traditional, country feel. The main income of the area is engendered from Abbotsbury Tourism – the Swannery and the Subtropical Gardens. The main employment is tourism - although many workers travel in for these jobs – and many such jobs are seasonal. Otherwise, residents are employed in neighbouring areas. There is a regular daily bus service from Lyme Regis/Axminster and Bridport to Weymouth passing through the village.

The village has two pubs plus many teashops, bed and breakfast establishments and individual shops. A farm shop, general store, and post office. It is a place to purchase the unusual. The Chesil Bank Pre-school meets in Strangways Hall with children of primary age attending nearby Portesham and Thorner's Schools. Most of the housing stock in Abbotsbury is leasehold, with a small number of freehold properties, estate rental properties and a small range of social housing. There is also a large transient population of holidaymakers.

St Nicholas Church, Grade 1 listed, dates from the late 14th century or early 15th century and was built as the parish church, alongside the Abbey Church of St Peter. The only remains of the Abbey are a wall to the south of the church, and St Catherine's chapel about a mile away.

The churchyard at St Nicholas remains open and such are the positive links between the church and the community that local people anticipate being buried in the churchyard.

The Church has support from the wider community for a variety of fund-raising efforts. The PCC enjoys a good working relationship with the Friends of St Nicholas's who raise funds for the upkeep of the fabric of the church. Over the past few years, they have organised superb concerts and annual open gardens event including the inaugural Abbotsbury landscape competition.

The church will be hosting a village flower festival as part of the village millennium celebrations. The Bishop of Salisbury will lead a service of Thanksgiving on July 14th. Further information is available at www.abbotsbury.co.uk



Langton Herring

Langton Herring is located five miles outside Weymouth, and just behind Chesil Beach and the Fleet, which is an important international wildlife reserve. The village is one of the smallest villages in the Benefice. There are about 100 houses, mainly freehold (about 25% of them are second or holiday homes), and the latest estimate of the population is 127, of whom about half are retired and 12 are children. Those who are employed mainly work locally in the Weymouth or Dorchester areas, although homeworking has increased.

There are no shops in the village, but there is the recently refurbished Elm Tree Inn, and a Forge opened one day a week. It has a small but thriving village hall with the attendant clubs, activities and social gatherings. This is opposite the church and can be used for coffee / toilets as well as events.

The village hosts the 'Chesil Rocks' music festival every June and has other events such as the annual Produce Show. There is no war memorial in the village, as happily, and uniquely in Dorset, all who served in both world wars returned safely, so we are a 'Doubly Thankful' village.

The tiny hamlet of Rodden is located about a mile away; while being part of Abbotsbury parish it has close links with Langton Herring.

St Peter's Church, Langton Herring is Grade II listed and dates to the 13th century, with many later additions and restorations. There is a 15th century font, a 16th century chalice and two 17th century bells. The churchwardens and PCC have made the decision to keep it open all the time. The churchyard and cemetery are both in the care of the PCC.

There are regular services at different times each week, an annual Lent study group and other regular social and fundraising events. The churchyard has been managed to promote local ecology, and volunteers help with some maintenance.

The church has been part of the *Small Pilgrim Places* network for a few years. The village is on several popular short and long-distance walks such as the South West Coast Path and the Hardy Way.



Littlebredy

Littlebredy is the easternmost and among the smallest of the villages in the Bride Valley, with a permanent population of about 80. It is mainly a traditional "estate village", with practically all the land and dwellings forming part of the Bridehead Estate. It is a Conservation Area within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, so there has been no building development to speak of in modern times, creating something of a "picture postcard" impression. There are children of school age or below in six of the 34 houses. Only four of the households are fully retired, and 3 dwellings are second homes. There are a few small commercial premises in the village, and the Victorian walled garden is being operated as a not-for-profit community enterprise. 7 households draw some or all of their income from local farms, horticulture, or the estate. Other villagers are self-employed or tend to travel to work in local employment centres.

Littlebredy has no shop, post office or other facilities and the Church and its nearby Village Hall (not technically the Church Hall) represent the only community buildings. The Littlebredy Social Club co-operates happily with the Church in community activities to benefit one or other organization or outside charities.

St Michael & All Angels Church stands in the middle of the village and has a capacity of about 120. Dating originally from the Middle Ages, it was considerably altered and extended in the 1850s (including the addition of one of Dorset's very few spires). The church is kept unlocked 24 hours a day for the benefit of visitors, who currently enjoy free permissive access to the Bridehead amenity grounds, lakeside and waterfall and often contribute to the Church in response.

In recent years significant repairs have been carried out to various parts of the church funded partly from savings and partly from the generosity of supporters. Once the annual share and insurance premium are paid, there remain funds in hand for outreach and routine maintenance and upkeep. However, the Quinquennial Inspection identified a need for systematic repairs and renewals to the stained-glass windows, and a Faculty Application is currently in hand.

Further information is available at www.littlebredy.com



Litton Cheney

Litton Cheney's population is 355. We have a pub (The White Horse Inn) and the **Litton and Thorner's Community Hall (LATCH)**, built next door to Thorner's School and jointly funded by the school and the local community. LATCH is used by the school during school hours and is available for use by the wider community at other times. It is a modern and well-equipped facility used occasionally by the church for United Services, Benefice Meetings and special events.

Dating in part to the 14th century, the beautiful **Grade 1 listed church of St. Mary**, stands on a hill overlooking the village. During the Spring and early Summer, the churchyard is a mass of primroses, oxeye daisies and other wildflowers which are allowed to flourish as a means of encouraging biodiversity. The church has been improved over the last two decades by the provision of a small kitchen area, a toilet, a sound enhancement system, a small car park, and internet access. The church fellowship has good links with Thorner's Church of England VA Primary School, and with the local community.

There are currently 34 members on the church Electoral Roll. The PCC has 9 lay members - 2 are Lay Worship Leaders, 1 is Chair of the Benefice Council and another serves on Bishop's Council.

The average congregation at regular services was 16 in 2022. Despite efforts in the recent past to attract young people and children, most worshippers are aged 60+. The car park assists access, but a steep climb up to the church does present a problem to some people.

Music plays an important part in our worship. Under the direction of an experienced organist, a choir of 12 sings an array of sacred choral music at special services and Choral evensongs.. The choir has also sung in other churches in the area and has sung at the Choral Evensong to open the Burton Bradstock Festival for the last two years.

Around 66% of the church's income derives from donations through the *Parish Giving Scheme*. The Parish Share paid to the Diocese in 2022 was £17,250 and has always been paid promptly and in full. Our charitable giving policy is to give 10% of any annual surplus on the general fund to support local, national and international charities.

A monthly coffee morning trialled last winter (2022) to provide a warm space and to attract young parents with pre-school children to the church was successful on both counts and will continue in 2023-4. A Village Fete, run as a joint venture between church and school in 2023, was also successful involving, as it did, many willing helpers who are not regular churchgoers. Further information is at www.littoncheney.org.uk/



Long Bredy

Long Bredy is a small and very rural parish situated towards the eastern end of the beautiful Bride Valley. Once, the majority of parishioners worked on the land, but nowadays only about 10% of the current population of about 230 are agricultural workers, while 35% are over retirement age and almost 17% of school age. The houses in the parish are mainly owner-occupied although there is rental accommodation and second homes. There is no shop or public house, but there is a well-kept Village Hall and a recreation ground.

St Peter's Church, much of which dates from the 13th century, enjoys an unsurpassed location on the edge of the village, encircled by downs. It is kept open every day and is often visited by locals and visitors to the area, easily found by car or passing by on one of the many footpaths/bridleways that surround it. Its beautiful location makes the churchyard a lovely, peaceful place for quiet contemplation or a family picnic.

St. Peter's offers two services per month, An all-age service is generally followed by coffee and cake and a chance for parishioners to chat. Every other year we have a living Nativity Service at Christmas with attendant donkeys and other farmyard animals. These additional services are very well attended by villagers and visitors. There is a very active group of bell ringers and an electronic chiming mechanism has also recently been installed. Like all other churches we face all the anxieties of a small congregation. We do appreciate the support of our lay worship leaders from other churches.

There are currently 21 on the Electoral Roll and the average attendance across all services in 2022 was 13 people. So far in 2022 we have had one baptism, two weddings and five funerals. Our income includes the proceeds from 13 'Planned Giving' covenants and the Diocesan share is currently fully paid. The church actively raises funds for the upkeep of the building and for charities which encourages a community spirit.

The church is Grade 1 listed and is kept in good repair by a group of volunteers, some of whom are not church attendees. Maintenance is ongoing, with over time improvements to the vestry and new oak door from vestry to outdoors, complete repair of tower walls, roof repairs, a new garden shed to house the lawn mowers instead of them being in the Church and recently the restoration of the James Walker Organ. The repair of the wall surrounding the church and churchyard is currently being carried out.

What we can offer: we are a cheerful, friendly, creative group renowned for our new ideas, home-baking and candle-lit services.

Further information is available at www.longbredy.org.uk



Portesham

Portesham is a friendly and welcoming village, found behind the famous Chesil Beach on the Jurassic Coast. As in many rural communities, villagers look after each other in an amazing way. In the village is a medical centre with pharmacy (prescription), that serves many villages, the Kings Arms Pub, Farm Shop with Coffee Shop and Village Hall. The Village Hall is home to a variety of local groups and activities, among them a badminton club, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, Women's Institute (WI), Pilates and Zumba, short mat bowls and Artsreach Entertainment. A popular addition to the social calendar is the Village Café which is run by many of the village groups. The strong branch of the British Legion also meets in the Village Hall. A Village Lunch is another monthly feature. The village has a touring caravan park on a peaceful site, used by many who want to explore the area for walking, sailing etc. Our Vicar takes weekly assemblies in the school and maintains a close contact with the staff and children.

St Peter's Church

St Peter's is the Parish Church, with 42 people on the Electoral Roll. The church, Grade I, has stood at the centre of the village for at least 1000 years and has had many changes through the centuries. The PCC has a good relationship with the Friends of St. Peters who contribute to the maintenance of the fabric of the church, valued by so many in the village. The ongoing reordering of the church continues. The rear of the building has had the pews removed to make a flexible space encouraging multiple use of the building, including hosting young people on the initial Diocesan pilgrimage, with the group eating in the church and camping in the rectory garden. Portesham Arts group have used the church for two wonderful candle lit concerts and the church is used regularly by a craft group. The next stages of the project will be to install a servery, and a toilet in the tower room.

There are big plans for 2024 as the village celebrates 1000 years of Orc receiving the manor of Portesham from King Canute. The church will be organising an "open Gardens" event and hosting a village flower festival.

Portesham has a Methodist Church, whose congregation join with the Anglicans on numerous occasions in both churches including a Palm Sunday procession with live donkey! Members of both churches support a thriving Bible Study Group.

On the edge of Portesham is the small community at Corton Farm where one of the buildings is Corton Chapel, dedicated to St Bartholomew.

Further information is available at www.portesham.org.uk



Puncknowle

Puncknowle is a rural parish, historically linked with West Bexington. Puncknowle itself is a small village comprising about 180 households, some of which are holiday homes and/or second homes, and boasts a caravan/camping site, and a pub, the Crown Inn, which is very supportive of the Church and where the congregation is invited to have coffee after a service – free of course!

West Bexington comprises approximately 50 households, with an hotel, The Manor, a farm shop, a restaurant, access to the South West Coast Path, and a car park for visitors, many of whom come to enjoy the fishing from the renowned Chesil Beach.

The most obvious major industrial activity of the area is farming, but there are several small businesses based in the two villages and a number of individuals working from home. The population is diverse, and includes retired locals, retired incomers, and quite recently, a number of incoming families with young children. Most primary aged children go to Thorner's CE (VA) School in Litton Cheney, but some go to Burton Bradstock CE (VC) School and several of the current PCC have served as Governors.

The church of St Mary is the oldest in the Bride Valley dating back to Norman times, with seating for approximately 90. It was substantially developed in 1669, and 1891, but has not been modernised. Recently, however, the church has had all the crumbling plaster repaired and been completely redecorated thanks to grants from the Erskine Muton Fund and The National Churches Fund. Access is difficult for those with mobility problems.

A recent worship development has been Breakfast Church held in the Village Hall at 9.30 am although this is now being replaced by a Café Church back in St Mary's itself. With the co-operation and goodwill of many of the villagers and the owners of Puncknowle Manor, we are able to consistently raise between £3,000 and £4,000 at our annual fete.

The church hall, which is about 200 yards from the church, has been leased to a village charity which runs it for the benefit of the community. The PCC has use of the hall for up to 3 times a month, free of charge.

Further information is available at www.puncknowle.net



Shipton Gorge

Shipton Gorge has a population of 382 of which 39% are 65+ in age. Many residents are relative newcomers, having retired to this attractive rural area. 13% of the population are 0-16 years. Particularly popular and well supported amongst the retired and slightly older generation, are the many village activities and societies.

St Martin's Church is the only licensed place of worship in the village. Average attendance at Holy Communion is 8 and at Breakfast Church, attendance is usually about 20+, including 5 regular families that attend. Breakfast Church, running for 2 years, is a more informal style of worship, starting with breakfast and followed by hymns, a Bible story, a related craft or activity and prayers. People who come along value the warm welcome and the children enjoy seeing their friends, the crafts and definitely the big breakfasts! With volunteers from the families now taking an active role in preparing aspects of this worship, this is very much a positive step for St Martin's and something that we would like to continue and develop. Special services (Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday and the Carol Service) are well attended and St Martin's also hosts a popular yearly pet service

After an absence of bellringing for many years, 6 new learners undertook intensive training in order to be ready to 'Ring for the King' and are now ringing regularly for services with additional new recruits recently beginning their training too. There is great support for the restarting of bellringing in the village and we hope this enthusiasm will lead to increased interest in the life of the church generally.

There are 49 people on the electoral roll, but we have just 3 PCC members and have been without a Churchwarden for many years. Many of the existing congregation have been PCC members in the past and are very supportive, but the PCC continues to encourage others to join, as well as hoping for a new Churchwarden.

Our Quinquennial in 2022 identified some urgent areas of maintenance and repair and the PCC have recently voted to dig into reserves to spend money on two of the most pressing issues, with further areas to be addressed to stabilise the situation in the coming years. In total, we face a repairs bill of £16 000+. Additionally, this year, for the first time, we are unable to pay our full parish share

Further details about life in Shipton Gorge are available via the village website and Facebook page. www.shiptongorge.org.uk



Swyre

The population of Swyre is around 100. It is a working village with Manor and Modbury Farms, small businesses, people working from home and holiday accommodation, but also many people are retired. The Parish is a broad strip running from the beach to the river Bride.

Holy Trinity Church is a welcoming, light, and peaceful space for worship, prayer and meditation and is well known for extending a warm welcome to everyone. It is set in a quiet churchyard, half an hour's walk from Chesil Beach and the Southwest Coast Path, part of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. The church is a modest building that goes back to the 13th century. It was rebuilt on its original footprint in the 1840s with a vestry and then an organ added in the 1890s, but it retains its medieval tower, chancel arch and bells. There is easy access for wheelchair users with minimal help. The church is always open during the day thanks to a rota of residents in the village. Many people come from far afield to look in the churchyard for their family history and to visit the graves of loved ones.

The small congregation is wholeheartedly committed to maintaining a hospitable and prayerful place of worship, especially when, on both joyful and sad occasions, we have larger than usual congregations. The church festivals of Christmas and Easter and our Songs of Praise during the summer also bring many visitors to the church. In addition to Sunday services, there is a Julian Group which meets to pray and meditate once a month. Services are supported by a regular core of worshippers. The church can seat up to 70 people but on occasions many more have been accommodated. The rear of the church has had the traditional pews removed and replaced by more comfortable chairs. This offers flexibility for our services and community events. Regular fund-raising events include Coffee Mornings, Easter Egg Hunts, concerts, history presentations and a marquee at the summer fete in Puncknowle.

Support from the village is reflected in the generous wholehearted response to fund-raising. Funds raised are shared between charitable donations and the need to maintain the upkeep of the church.

Holy Trinity has just become part of the *Small Pilgrim Places* network and there are currently plans to install mains water and drainage in order to expand the facilities. The members of the PCC believe that we all stand in need of God's Grace and are here to help each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Further information is available at the shared website www.puncknowle.net

Our Schools

Burton Bradstock CE Primary School (Initio Academy Trust)

Burton Bradstock CE Primary School is adjacent to the Church and is part of the multi-academy Initio Learning Trust, which includes schools in Bridport and Wimborne. The school educates children from 3 to 11 yrs with the majority transferring to Sir John Colfox School, Bridport, for secondary education. It has recently been successful in gaining the Rights Respecting Schools' Silver Award with many fundamental values reflecting and supporting the school's Christian Vision and Values.

There is a well-established Chaplaincy group which supports the Christian ethos in numerous ways. Throughout the year the school holds collective worship in the Church eg Harvest, Remembrance, Christingle, Easter and Leavers' services. A recent innovation has involved chaplaincy and church members preparing 'Experience Advent' and 'Experience Easter' events to which children are invited to participate. Open the Book is very popular and provides opportunities for the school to worship with members of the community. Y5&6 pupils take responsibility for the Village Coffee Stop twice a year when they serve and communicate with villagers and visitors.

There is a thriving parents association, the Friends, which organise several fundraising events throughout the year including the popular Christmas Fair and Duck Race at Easter. Further the information can be found on the school's website: www.burtonbradstock.dorset.sch.uk

Thorner's CE VA Primary School

Thorner's CE VA Primary School, founded in 1690, has a current roll of 85 pupils of which only 18 live in Litton Cheney, the remainder living in the surrounding towns and villages. A further 12 children attend Fledglings Pre-School which became fully part of the main school in 2016. The school is an integral part of village life with strong links to the church, all the children process to St Mary's at the start and end of each term for a school service. The school achieved a 'Good' rating at the last Ofsted and SIAMS inspections. Staff and governors are encouraged to attend briefings and courses offered by SDBE. The Rector is ex officio a school governor and attends twice termly governors' meetings.

The Rector or a representative takes a weekly school assembly and takes an active part in school life advising on the Christian ethos of the school and religious activities. An After School Club, Big Q Church (based on the Messy Church approach), started three years ago. One of the three Lay Worship Leaders is Deputy Chair of Governors and chairs the Communication and Ethos Council, she is one of a team of three who leads "Open the Book" assemblies once a week. Further information is available on the school's website: www.thorners.dorset.sch.uk

Portesham Primary School Academy (First Federation Trust)

We are a small school serving the villages of Portesham, Langton Herring and Abbotsbury, and the farms and hamlets between them. We currently have 60 children on roll. The school benefits from a close relationship with the Church communities and the wider communities around us. Every child is valued and our staff team work hard to ensure that everybody in the school community flourishes and achieves the very best they can. Individuality is celebrated, personal strengths developed, and children are supported to find positive ways to express their thoughts, feelings and opinions.

Rev. Margaret visits school weekly to lead Assembly and joins us to celebrate key Christian festivals. Every child knows her, and staff consider her one of the team. We look forward to welcoming the new Rector into the school community too. www.portesham.dorset.sch.uk/

APPENDIX

Service Plan (January 2024) NB showing a reduction of services during the vacancy

	First Sunday	Second Sunday	Third Sunday	Fourth Sunday
Abbotsbury	11.00 am Parish Communion	9.00 am Holy Communion BCP		10.00 am Family Praise
Burton Bradstock	11.00 am Songs of Praise	11.00 am Holy Communion	8.00 Holy Communion 9.30 am Café Church*	
Chilcombe			6.30 pm Evening Prayer (April – October)	
Langton Herring	9.00 am Holy Communion BCP	11.00 am Parish Communion CW	10.00 am Family Praise	
Littlebredy		11.00 am Holy Communion		11.00 am Morning Worship
Litton Cheney	9.30 am Holy Communion	9.30 am Morning Worship*	9.30 am Matins (BCP)	9.30 am Morning Worship
Long Bredy	11.00 am Holy Communion		9.30 am Morning Worship	
Portesham		10.00 am Family Praise*	11.00 am Parish Communion	9.00 am Holy Communion
Puncknowle		9.30 am Holy Communion		11.00 am Café Church*
Shipton Gorge		9.30 am Breakfast Church*		11.00 am Holy Communion
Swyre	3.00 pm Evening Prayer	11.00 am Morning Worship*	11.00 am Holy Communion	

*Locally led

Safeguarding in the Benefice of The Bride Valley and Chesil

The united Benefice of Bride Valley and Chesil has elected to have one Safeguarding Officer (Les Keatley); Les is experienced in all fields of safeguarding and attends all Diocese training opportunities. Due to the size of some of our parishes, a single reference point rather than separate Parish SGOs was preferred. The SGO offers direct support to each parish PCC and will attend all PCC meetings as required. He is a member of the Burton Bradstock PCC. The officer oversees all the safeguarding, DBS and training requirements of all the parishes of the Benefice, and is also able to support training and offer 'Basic' and 'Foundation' training in-house. As a Benefice we are developing 'safeguarding support' for any member of the teams.

The SGO welcomes and supports a good working practice with the incumbent and all other members of the team; he also keeps connections with the SGO of the neighbouring Benefice of Bridport. All our parishes have adopted the House of Bishops Safeguarding Policy and the new Parish Dashboard, which we are working closely to fully implement. We are also currently improving the operation of the 'Safer Requirement' policy.

Census Data and Electoral Rolls

Census Data (2021)													
	All Males	All Females	All Persons	Males 0 to 15	Females 0 to 15	% 0 to 15	Males 16 to 64	Females 16 to 64	% 16 to 64	Males 65+	Females 65+	% 65+	Electoral Roll
Burton Bradstock	453	474	927	47	20	7.23%	179	219	42.93%	227	235	49.84%	76
Shipton Gorge & Chilcombe	176	206	382	21	27	12.57%	89	107	51.31%	66	72	36.13%	49
Litton Cheney	156	193	349	20	30	14.33%	69	86	44.41%	67	77	41.26%	35
Puncknowle	225	217	442	32	33	14.71%	107	113	49.77%	86	71	35.52%	8
Swyre	41	49	90	5	6	12.22%	20	25	50.00%	16	18	37.78%	12
Long Bredy	93	98	191	15	16	16.23%	51	59	57.59%	27	23	26.18%	23
Littlebredy & Kingston Russell	75	63	138	16	6	15.94%	45	40	61.59%	14	17	22.46%	24
Abbotsbury	223	245	468	23	31	11.54%	133	141	58.55%	67	73	29.91%	14
Langton Herring & Fleet*	111	116	227	9	7	7.05%	63	62	55.07%	39	47	37.89%	21
Portesham	374	376	750	56	38	12.53%	176	198	49.87%	142	140	37.60%	42
*Population of Langton Herring (Fleet not included in the Benefice): 150													