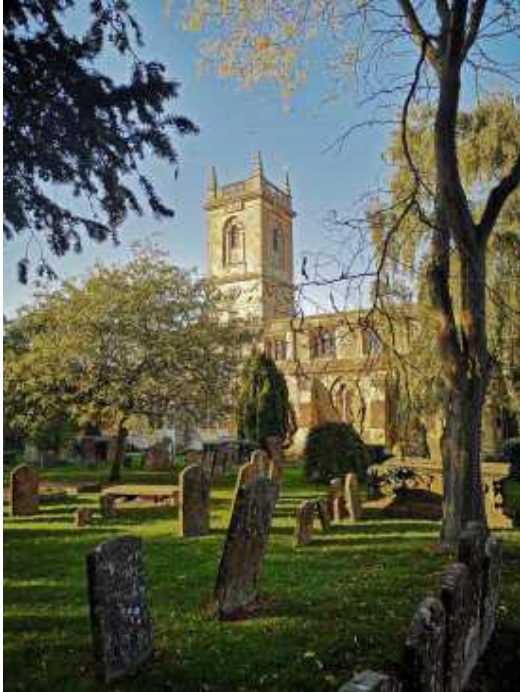


Parish Profile

Appointment of an Incumbent for the Benefice of Woodstock and Bladon



St Mary Magdalene Woodstock



St Martin's Bladon

Summary

A benefice with two solvent, well kept churches only 2.5 miles apart set on the edge of the Cotswolds with excellent transport links and 3 good/excellent welcoming CofE schools. The population is expanding further with 900 more new houses planned. The congregations want leadership from a new Rector to help welcome more into following Christ in a way that resonates with 21st century lives. The Benefice benefits from generous support of a number of retired clergy.

<https://woodstockandbladon.com>

The website is in the process of being revamped completely.

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Dear potential applicants

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

The Benefice of Woodstock and Bladon is seeking a Rector to lead it in worship, ministry and outreach. The Benefice offers much that is appreciated in our Anglican tradition: a value for liturgy and music, thought-provoking preaching, pastoral care and a broad outlook. Yet, whilst enjoying these traditions the Benefice continues to look forward and recognises the current and future challenges and opportunities .

The Benefice is seeking a Rector who will lead them in growing in:

- their own personal discipleship
- their impact with outreach to new housing, children and families through planning ahead
- their service to their communities through an increased use of their buildings as well as their going out to others and being involved in local groups

The benefice is looking for a priest who will be prayerful and creative, offer wisdom and sensitivity, be a good communicator and someone who is able to support and encourage the ministry of others. As you will read, the benefice is also committed to caring for their Rector as he or she will care for them.

The benefice recognises that the churches do not in all ways share the diversity of the communities they serve and would particularly welcome those who would increase diversity.

You will find a friendly deanery with supportive and experienced colleagues. Our episcopal area and diocese are in good heart, expectant for all that God will do and thankful for all that God is doing.

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

With every blessing

+ Gavin Dorchester

The Rt Revd Gavin Collins, Bishop of Dorchester



Woodstock Deanery

The Woodstock Deanery is set in a beautiful area of the English Countryside. At its centre is Blenheim Palace (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), which attracts thousands of visitors every year. The parkland around the Palace is a beautiful resource which is well used for outdoor recreation by both members of the local area and visitors. To the north, the Deanery is characterised by relatively small rural villages forming four multi-parish benefices, three of which have a stipendiary priest, and the fourth is a “House for Duty” appointment. *(The communities in this area range in size from 200 to 1600 with a total population of around 8000 shared between 14 centres of population.)* The south of the Deanery has one market town, Woodstock, and eight villages, all of which have seen major housing growth in the past 50 years.



This area has four multi-parish benefices, each with their own stipendiary priest. *(The communities in this area range in size from 500 to 6,000 with a total population of around 20,000 shared between 10 centres of population.)* The worship offered in the churches of the Deanery offer a broad range of traditions that are part of the historical life of the Church of England. Across the Deanery there is a good level of constructive support offered between the various benefices, by both clergy and laity. In times of sickness or other challenges and difficulties, there is a willing hand of friendship not far away.

The Covid pandemic and the cost-of-living issues, especially relating to energy costs, have had a significant impact on the health of community life in the area and consequently the life of the churches. The lives of many of the various worshipping communities are struggling to recover, given that often many of their leading members are now significantly older. Re-engaging with and enlivening the link between the life of the church and the life of the wider community needs to be a major focus for the future health of the Christian faith in this area. This outreach needs to embrace members of the local community as well as providing points of contact with the large number of visitors, national and inter-national, that come to Woodstock. One issue in this locality, which is likely to be contentious for the near future, is a proposal to construct a very large solar farm adjoining the southern and western borders of the Deanery. Providing a listening and constructive forum for this potentially fractious debate could be a significant role for the church.

For further information, please feel free to contact Andrew Bunch (Area Dean) on 07851064269.

Introduction

The Benefice of Woodstock with Bladon comprises the Parishes of St Mary Magdalene's, Woodstock, and St Martin's Bladon. We seek a new Rector. The benefice is in the Woodstock Deanery, the Dorchester Archdeaconry, and the Bishop of Dorchester's Episcopal Area within the Diocese of Oxford. Our Patron is the Duke of Marlborough. Our church life is in the mainstream Anglican tradition. We value our liturgical and musical tradition, and we are willing to explore new forms of liturgy. The clergy are appropriately robed for all Eucharistic and formal services. Our congregations are generally well-educated and broad in theological outlook, and include people at different stages on the Christian journey. We enjoy an intelligent and well-argued sermon, sometimes accompanied by visual aids, which seeks to support, inspire, and challenge the way we think and live our lives. Our congregations are predominately older, and we would love to attract younger people and families, and feel we have a great deal to offer them. With the new housing in the area, particularly in Woodstock (an additional 900 houses almost doubling the size of the town) this is a great opportunity.

We have spent a lot of time and money on creating and maintaining our beautiful buildings, and now want to move into a time where we look outwards more, share our space and community with others, and share God's love to the community around us.

Our Current Mission

- Proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.
- Grow the congregations by reaching out to the new housing, young families, and explore different ways of getting alongside people who do not know of the life changing message of Jesus Christ.
- Nurture and grow in our faith in ways that resonate in our daily lives.
- Serve God and one another, and to be deeply rooted and involved in the local community – reaching out to all our neighbours and beyond.

Key Aspirations for the Future

Grow our Church Communities:

- Encourage all members of the church to have a lively appreciation of their Christian faith.
- Facilitate an open sense of community within the church to enable new members to feel welcome.
- Develop our involvement with families and children through our excellent links with local CofE schools, and hence build a new, younger demographic for our churches.
- Enable the growth of our Junior and Adult Choirs and encourage their musical expression.
- Develop a programme to bring about a greater involvement with the recent new housing and the planned 900 new homes.
- Use the richness of the Anglican liturgy to interact with new worshipping communities. Develop the rich potential of Anglican liturgy to appeal to people seeking to know God.
- Use our churches and Bladon rooms to expand our work within the wider community.

Improve Communication:

- Develop appropriate ways of communicating the good news of Jesus Christ for those who are unfamiliar with the gospel message.
- Provide appropriate informative, intelligent, and challenging sermons for different settings.
- Enable the process (not the doing) of improvement and maintenance of our web site to be current, attractive and informative.
- Develop our presentation of the Christian faith to visitors and tourists to our churches.

Person Specification

- Have a strong sense of pastoral ministry to the local communities within our benefice.
- Be a Christian leader who is good at communicating in a timely manner, able and willing to utilise and motivate a team of clergy and laity to best advantage.
- A person of prayer, with a missional heart and a sound theological knowledge.
- Confidence to share the good news of Jesus Christ in a way that is appropriate to the audience.
- Willing to try new forms and times of worship to reach out to those who currently do not attend church, and be resolved to learn from failures and ultimately find what works.
- To plan ahead, delegate and utilise additional resources to build additional capacity.
- Appreciate the value of music and how it enhances the worship of God.
- Give guidance and support as we address with sensitivity the challenging issues associated with "Living in Love and Faith".
- Ability and willingness to guide and train ordinands and / or curates in their development.

We expect our new Rector

- To take their weekly day off, and full entitlement of annual leave.
- To go on retreat once a year to rest, reflect, and refocus on God's calling.
- To continue with agreed suitable training opportunities that they feel called to undertake.

St Mary Magdalene's Activities

The Church stands in the centre of Woodstock with the town's war memorial on the north side between the church and the main street, and a beautifully cared for biodiverse churchyard (closed for burials), providing a haven for wildlife and people on the south side. The church is open daily, and gets a surprising number of visitors from within the UK and abroad. The electoral roll is 101.

Services

Sunday 8.00 am Said Holy Communion (BCP) with a sermon.

Average attendance 15, consisting of a loyal regular band of worshippers.

Sunday 11.00 am Sung Eucharist (Common Worship) with a sermon.

Typical attendance is 60-80. The singing is normally led by a cantor, and every month or so by our Junior/Adult choirs. The Junior choir has only just restarted. *We also have occasional ad hoc or visiting choirs.



We use a mix of standard service sheets, but also use bespoke service sheets which allow flexibility of liturgy and music.

We have two organists, Ian Blunsdon and Guy Reeves, who enjoy playing for the services. Ian also runs the choirs. Traditional hymns make up the core of the hymns with modern hymns and anthems being used particularly at Christmas.

Tea, filter coffee and biscuits are served after the service from the servery in the north aisle.

The PCCs have agreed to have a combined service on the 5th Sunday of each month, alternating between the churches.

Sunday 5.30 pm we lead worship at Spencer Court, which is a local care home. Short service with hymns led by different churches in rotation coordinated through a local interdenominational organisation known as Churches Together.

Wednesday Said Holy Communion (BCP) 10 am, average attendance 12

Weekdays Morning Prayer by Zoom 9am (Anglican liturgy from an app). Typical attendance varies from 8 to 16. Led by the laity. Includes prayers for each member of the congregation by name in rotation.



In the last 12 months (Nov 23) there were 5 weddings, 25 funerals (much higher than normal), and 7 baptisms (fewer than usual), normally held during the main service on a Sunday.

St Mary Magdalene's Typical events

Wednesday evening. Junior choir practice followed by Adult choir practice.

Attendance currently 9 children (with Parents listening), and 12 to 14 adults.

Thursday evening Bell ringing (and on Sundays and for weddings). Typical attendance 6 to 8.



Thursday Group. A one-hour Bible study held in a house led by the laity. Typical attendance 12 to 18.



Churchyard. Most days the churchyard is looked after and developed by an enthusiastic group of 10 helpers, with the Town Council responsible for mowing most of the graveyard.

Pastoral visiting. When required there is a group of 8 people led by Gemma Ferrier to visit those in need of pastoral support, or just a conversation to avoid loneliness, or support due to illness.

Saturday Coffee mornings.

The Saturday Cafés are held on the first Saturday morning of each month, to coincide with the farmers' market in Woodstock. Proceeds normally go to the local foodbank. Typical attendance is 30 to 60.



Saturdays. Flower arranging team who provide flower arrangements throughout the year, for special occasions and can liaise with requirements for weddings and funerals.

Sundays Bring and Share Lunches 4 times a year



after the main service. Proceeds are normally split between the church and various charities, one of which is Christian Aid.

A variety of fundraising events, from opera, to meals, to concerts to talks, are held throughout the year.

A Christmas Lunch is held in the church, this year and last year the food was provided free by Blenheim. We are

extending it this year from those who are needy to those who are on their own at Christmas. We hosted 15 in 2023 (last year 12).

The church is a flexible space with a Vestry which is used as both a vestry and office, an upper room for small meetings and a small robing room. The church is regularly hired out to the following groups: Alcoholics Anonymous (upper room weekly), Probus for Lunch every month, Woodstock Society for a talk most months, Woodstock Exhibition foundation for a talk twice a year, Woodstock Literary society for a talk twice or more a year, Wake up to Woodstock for the 2-day Christmas fair, Woodstock Music society for 3 concerts during the year and occasionally the Poetry festival.

The main entrance to the church has a slope and automatic glass doors to ensure it is wheelchair/electric buggy friendly.

This is as extract of 2.5 months of activities towards the end of the year which is busier than normal. Photos are of the annual festive Fayre run by the local trade association where we serve coffee and cakes.

| Date | Title | Brief Details |
|--------|---|--|
| 01-Oct | Harvest Bring and share lunch | sign up now |
| 07-Oct | Monthly café | Tasty coffee/cakes with no calories (?) & great company |
| 07-Oct | Bladon Fundraising concert in Bladon Church | Hear great Organ playing |
| 14-Oct | Come and sing Mozart's Mass | Woodstock Music Society www.woodstockmusic.info |
| 16-Oct | Woodstock Society | Monthly fascinating talks all welcome www.woodstockociety.org |
| 26-Oct | Sustainable Woodstock | Debate about solar farm all welcome free |
| 27-Oct | Jarisel Concert fundraiser | Fundraiser for Roof Folk music. Tickets on sale now £12 |
| 04-Nov | Monthly café | More calorie free (?) cakes/coffee & great company |
| 04-Nov | SOFO concert | Waterloo military band Remembrance Concert tickets from SOFO |
| 11-Nov | Coffee morning for poppy appeal | organised by the poppy appeal |
| 18-Nov | Oxford Man Choir Concert | In aid of Roof/Motor Neuron Disease fundraiser organised by Jerrams Brothers |
| 20-Nov | Woodstock Society | Monthly fascinating talks all welcome www.woodstockociety.org |
| 24-Nov | WUTW Festive Fayre | mulled wine and artisan Christmas presents |
| 25-Nov | WUTW Festive Fayre | coffee, cakes and artisan Christmas presents |
| 01-Dec | Poetry festival | Run by Woodstock bookshop |
| 02-Dec | Poetry festival | Run by Woodstock bookshop |
| 08-Dec | Woodstock Music Society concert | Woodstock Music Society www.woodstockmusic.info |
| 09-Dec | Woodstock Music Society concert | Woodstock Music Society www.woodstockmusic.info |



St Martin's, Bladon Activities

The Church stands in the centre of Bladon, and is famous as the site of Sir Winston Churchill's grave, and has an attractive churchyard, maintained by volunteers from the congregation. The electoral roll is 59. The church is open daily and receives visitors from all around the world, many of whom come to visit the grave of Churchill.

Services

Sunday 9.30 am

Sung Eucharist (Common Worship) average attendance 40

Family Service (3rd Sunday) average attendance 30

After the 9.30 am service tea and coffee is served in the church rooms opposite.

Music is led by director of Music Mr Tom McCoy, who is a fine musician, assisted by Guy Reeves, Organist. The choir is very experienced, but could benefit from some new members.

There are 12 regular singers, 3 tenors, 3 sopranos, 4 altos and 2 basses who sing at services on 2nd and 4th Sundays. We have well attended candle lit carol services at Christmas, and on occasions we have had "sing ins" of The Messiah at Christmas and Stainer's Crucifixion at Easter. A Christingle service shown below.

The PCCs have agreed to have a combined service on 5th Sundays, alternating between the churches. In the last 12 months (from Nov 23) there has been 1 wedding, 6 funerals, and 2 baptisms.

Picture: A recent Sunday service.



Pictures: Coffee after Church in the church rooms right and a candlelit service at Christmas below



St Martin's, Bladon Typical Events

Wednesdays in term time. The Toddler Group meets in the Church Rooms, with an average of 5 families. We provide toys for the children and refreshments for the carers.



First Tuesday of the month. Lunch Club, which brings between 15 to 30 people, with a larger attendance at the Christmas lunch (shown below).



Tuesday evening bell practice typical attendance 6.

Wednesday evening choir practice. Typical attendance 7.

A reception or supper to mark the Patronal Festival in November. The weekend nearest 10th June, (the date when the new Church was dedicated) is Bladon Feast weekend. This usually includes races for the children on the Recreation Ground, a cream tea, and a bouncy castle, BBQ and dancing in the village pub on Saturday evening.

The annual Christian Aid fete is held in the churchyard each May, and is very successful.

The Friends of St Martin's (FSOM) is a separate charity, and provides funds to support the fabric of the church and Church Room. They organise a number of fundraising events including cream teas, lectures, concerts, and trips out, and have contributed recently to the replacement heating in the Church and the Church Room, renovation of the lychgate, restoration of the church clock and the pipe organ, and the installation of a disabled toilet and ramp for the Church Room.

Local organisations

Churches Together

Both Churches are part of a local ecumenical organisation called Churches Together in Woodstock and Bladon which offers a weekly service on Sundays at 5.30pm in Spencer Court, our local care Home. Woodstock has Roman Catholic, Baptist and Methodist Churches as well as the Anglican Church. This means that each Church leads approximately one service per month. This also provides the means to coordinate other joint services and actions like publicising Easter and Christmas services.

Paul Carter, Oxford Circuit of the Methodist Church and chairman of Churches together writes *“Relationships are good with local churches of other denominations and there is a range of joint activities: St Mary Magdalene’s and St Martin’s are members of Churches Together in Woodstock and Bladon alongside Roman Catholic, Baptist and Methodist Churches. The benefice is also represented on the ecumenical Woodstock Youth Work Trust, which currently employs a youth worker, part of whose job is to be a chaplain in the local secondary school; WYWT hopes to be able to employ a second person shortly, to expand work in local primary schools”.*

Woodstock Youth Work Trust

Matt Bodinham set up a charity www.woodstockyouthworktrust.co.uk about 4 years ago. It is an ecumenical Christian youth work project that exists to see the young people of Woodstock and its surrounding areas, grow deeper in their relationship with God. Matt is currently the only employee but there are plans to recruit an additional part time resource. Matt is a member of the Baptist church and occasionally worships at St Mary Magdalene. He has been a tireless focal point for the youth of Woodstock. He has been supporting the Marlborough school for several years and the school have valued his work so much that they have recently employed him on a part time basis which will include him working in Woodstock Primary school for some of that time. He has in the past run a Saturday evening event for young people held in St Mary Magdalene but that struggled to remain viable after COVID.

Matt Bodinham writes *“We have been deeply blessed by our relationship with StMM, as it has allowed us to connect with wider networks, and developed opportunities to reach out into the local schools, provided us with a Trustee who acts a representative between the two organisation, as well as praying regularly for the work with young people, and giving financially towards the work of the trust.”*

Rector Support

There is substantial support for a Rector:

The two churches within the benefice operate separately with some shared facilities and activities. When joint decisions have been needed between the two parishes over many years, they have been agreed amicably. The Clergy work together across both parishes and the three schools in a flexible way. We value being in a small benefice and endeavour to approach common issues together in the belief we can both learn from each other and support each other.

Associate Clergy

We have a number of active and committed associate clergy including

Reverend Canon Dr Andrew Bunch is recently retired, lives in Long Hanborough, works as a Spiritual Director, leads services in the Benefice and Deanery, and is a member of the Bible Study Group and Pastoral Visitors Team. He was appointed Area Dean in January 2024.

Gemma Ferrier lives in Woodstock and has been a lay pastoral assistant in the Benefice for the past year. Gemma started ordination training at The Queen's Foundation in Birmingham in September 2023. Her course entails 2 or 3 days a week working in the Benefice, which is currently supervised by Andrew Bunch.

Reverend Katie Jones, lives locally and has a background in boarding schools and chaplaincy. She has a love of rural ministry, family, and pastoral work. She is most happy when working as part of a team with others to help bring in God's Kingdom within the benefice and wider deanery.

Reverend Dr Stephen Pix, is retired, lives in Woodstock and takes regular services, particularly funerals and helps around the Deanery.

Reverend Dr Shaun Henson lives in Bladon, has a full-time job as Departmental Lecturer in Science and Religion at Oxford University, and is a prolific author. He leads the occasional service for the Benefice. His wife is a cantor at Woodstock, and joins the Choirs in Bladon and Woodstock on special occasions.

There are also 4 other clergy (1 a retired bishop) who worship frequently in our Churches.

Marion Williams is the Rector's secretary, and has been quietly and efficiently undertaking this role for 8 years, and substantially reduces the admin load on the Rector. She works in the mornings from the vestry at St Mary Magdalene's, or from home (average 4 days a week). She is responsible for the email list, coordinating the weekly news sheet, printing service sheets, and general admin. She completes all of the quarterly returns, etc. required by the Diocese, and is the first point of contact for the Benefice. She also uploads information to the Web site. We are aware that the website is now in need of a complete overhaul, and (as of Feb 24) we are in the process of commissioning a professional webdesigner to implement a new website for us. <http://woodstockandbladon.com/>

Woodstock Organisation

The PCC has 11 members, and meets typically 10 times a year for about 1.5 to 2 hours, and some share fellowship afterwards in a local pub.

Meetings are good, productive and amicable but with challenge and rigour. The standing committee meets to discuss fundraising for the roof and other matters affecting the life of the church. The two Churchwardens are invaluable, and provide significant support to the Rector, which will continue into the new incumbency, plus the treasurer provides significant non-financial support. We are represented on the Deanery Synod by 2 representatives.



There are five teams (one for each Sunday of the month) that assist at the 11.00 am Sunday service by providing welcomers, sidespersons, readers, intercessors, and serve refreshments after the service. There is a rota for opening and closing the church, and volunteers look after other aspects of running the church, including managing the free-will offering envelope scheme and Gift Aid, cleaning the church, and maintaining the churchyard.

We have a designated Safeguarding Officer who in her professional life is an expert on adult social care, and one of the PCC members is a school governor with additional safeguarding training and experience. This ensures that we are actively compliant and aware of safeguarding. E.g. we have notices in our toilets about who to contact for various issues.

Like most churches, we need to persuade more people to help so that the necessary work is spread more evenly across the congregation.

Woodstock Finances

The Woodstock finances are satisfactory, with unrestricted reserves of £16k. The parish share was paid in full in 2022 and 2023. All Clergy expenses for the Benefice are presented to Woodstock PCC for payment and are fully reimbursed (the cost is split with Bladon).

The unrestricted income for 2023 for St Mary Magdalene PCC (a registered charity <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5061796>) is £120k of which 65% is regular reliable income/donations. As at Q4 2023 there is a total of £65k restricted funds. Total unrestricted expenditure slightly less than income.

The Blenheim Estate provided an interest free flexible loan of £80k (together with a substantial £50k gift) for the reordering of the church 5 years ago (new heating and boilers, completely new wiring, new LED lighting, new toilets, servery, slope and glass doors for disabled access, redecoration, AV, remove pews and replace with chairs). We paid off £10k

in 2023 and only £15k is left to repay (as at Q4 2023). The aim is to pay off the balance within 3 years, which is being paid off with regular restricted giving at £5k a year. A new roof is expected to cost £160k; we have raised £70k and been promised a grant of £50k from Oxford Historic Churches Trust bringing our fundraising total to £120k in just over a year. Active fundraising on a small scale is continuing. In January 2024 we finally received planning permission (we already have a faculty) and are in the process of obtaining revised price estimates before we can approach other grant bodies. There are three grant bodies we believe will fill the shortfall. The fundraising team is the standing committee, and one member is responsible for preparing and submitting the grant applications. The curfew bell has a crack in it and will need replacing at some point. The fabric of the building is kept in good condition. The next quinquennial inspection will be undertaken when the roof is replaced.

Bladon organisation

Bladon PCC has a membership of 14 including two Deanery Synod representatives. This number includes the Associate Priest and Churchwardens. The PCC meets 4 to 5 times per year. Meetings are generally good natured, and quite often papers are circulated prior to the meeting so that everyone is well prepared to discuss any issues. Meetings are usually over in less than 2 hours. There are no subcommittees and the Standing Committee meets as necessary – twice last year. All members of the PCC act as welcomers. The Churchwardens set up the Church weekly for services and organise a rota of readers and intercessors.

St Martin's has a firm commitment to safeguarding; we recognise that this is a joint responsibility of us all, and that awareness is key. Our Parish Safeguarding Officer works with the Churchwardens and PCC to ensure safer recruitment and compliance with mandatory training requirements for all Church Officers. A safeguarding sub-group of the PCC is empowered to deal rapidly and sensitively with any safeguarding issues that arise, in conjunction with the Diocesan safeguarding team.

Bladon Finances

Bladon's finances are healthy with £31k of reserves. The Parish Share is paid in full. Owned by the PCC are The Church Room and the Church Cottage next door (rented by Miss Marenka Roseby who opens and closes the Church and frequently acts as verger). She is on the PCC and is our Deanery Synod representative. In addition, 19 Park Close, a few minutes' walk away is rented by the Rev'd Dr Shaun Henson, Licensed Priest, and was purchased to be a house for curates.

For the year ending 2022, our accounts show that we had a net income of £23,893 from planned giving and collections, and in addition £8,262 from the sale of cards etc and donations from visitors. We had a quinquennial inspection in 2018, and the church, which is grade II listed, is in good repair. The Church clock was restored in 2018, heating boiler replaced in 2019, Church Room improved in 2021, and in 2023 the complete refurbishment of our 1906 pipe organ (costing £86,000 raised through grants and donations). The Churchyard was closed in 2005, and West Oxfordshire District Council contributes £2750 per year to its upkeep whilst the Churchill Trust contributes £3000 annually for the care of the Churchill graves.

Woodstock and Bladon Setting

Woodstock and Bladon are about 9 miles north of Oxford and 7 miles from Witney. The Blenheim estate lies between the two parishes. The current estimated population of Woodstock and Bladon was 4,337 in 2021 and growing. Full details can be found at www.oxford.gov.uk/districtdata/downloads/file/1689/2021_woodstock_and_bladon

The area is beautiful, on the edge of the Cotswolds, and housing is expensive in comparison with the surrounding area. The rectory has a stunning outlook over Blenheim and is two minutes' walk from St Mary Magdalene's Church in Woodstock and 10 minutes' drive to St Martin's Church in Bladon.

Local Transport.

There are good transport links. Bladon has a half hourly bus going to Oxford via Woodstock and Oxford Parkway Train Station, and in the other direction going via Hanborough train station to Witney. Woodstock has an additional bus every half hour connecting Chipping Norton/Charlbury to Oxford City Centre and Oxford Train Station.

Trains from Hanborough station (situated in Long Hanborough), which is only 1 mile from the church in Bladon, connect to Oxford, Reading, and London Paddington and the other way to Worcester and Hereford. From Oxford Parkway trains go to London Marylebone and Oxford. Trains from Oxford also go to Birmingham.

We are situated a few miles from the A34 going down to Southampton and the M40 joining London to Birmingham.

Due to the good transport links, there is a proportion of people who commute daily or, periodically, to London and other centres by train or road.

Woodstock Town

Woodstock is a lively, bustling small town, a destination for people coming to eat and drink, especially at weekends, and to look around the town. Woodstock has 3 hotels, 6 pubs and a social club, 2 restaurants, cafes, a few shops including a Coop, butchers, greengrocer, shoe repairer, Ironmongers, 2 delis, charity shops, bookshops (one for new books one for second hand books) opticians, doctors' surgery, vet practice, pharmacy, museums, library, art galleries, town hall, football field, bowls and tennis club, open air swimming pool (summer only), and a fortnightly farmers' market.

It has a high number of professionals and a higher proportion of retired people. It has a population of about 3,400. The town has been growing over the last few years with one development underway and others planned (although contentious) that may increase the town by a further 900 houses. It is friendly and has a lot going on, from talks to music, to a weekly meal for the elderly. There are loads of clubs and societies such as Brownies and Guides, a Youth Club, Stroke Club, History Society, Natural History group, Probus, Women's Institute, Woodstock Society, Woodstock Literary Society, Poetry Society, Woodstock Music Society, Bowls and Tennis Club etc.

Bladon Village

Bladon is quieter due to having fewer amenities, but has a strong village culture and a population of about 800. While the percentage of older people is above the national average, the proportion of young people under 16 is at the national average. There is a relatively low proportion of residents from ethnic minorities. The road through Bladon is extremely busy and will become even more congested as new housing is built in the area. It now has a 20mph limit. Bladon itself has had some infill building by the Blenheim estate, including some additional housing in the Home Farm and the Pitts.

Bladon's pub, the White House, has recently become a community pub bought mainly by locals. Apart from providing good food and drink, and acquiring CAMRA approval, it is a community hub with cribbage and Aunt Sally matches, a weekly quiz, a craft group and more. The Church Room is used for coffee after the services, and for events and meetings. The Recreation Ground, owned by the village and leased to the Parish Council, has a children's play area, a multiuse games area (MUGA), community orchard, wildflower meadow, boules court and outdoor gym. It is well used by the school and villagers. Nearby there are 25 allotments.

Other Local Amenities

Between Woodstock and Bladon sits Blenheim Palace, a UNESCO World Heritage site, palace, lovely grounds to walk in and many events throughout the year. The rectory overlooks the park and lakes with a stunning view. The Palace attracts nearly a million visitors over a year and some of those visit our churches, our services, and the local area. There is a close connection between Blenheim and the benefice. There is a massive solar farm being proposed in the area, called Botley West, where Blenheim is the main party, which has led to substantial discussion www.botleywest.co.uk Supermarkets and other shopping are in Kidlington, Witney, and Oxford. Oxford is a major cultural centre with several theatres and music venues, along with the University colleges and the Ashmolean Museum

Employment

Blenheim Palace www.blenheimpalace.com is a major employer in the area. Owen Mumford, a manufacturer of medical devices for diabetes www.owenmumford.com is the other major employer with one factory in Woodstock. The majority of the working-age population commutes to Oxford, Witney, and other employment hubs in central Oxfordshire and of course London. There are a high proportion of professionals or retired professionals in Woodstock and Bladon.

Schools

We have three lovely schools in the benefice, and all are rated good with Ofsted (some aspects as excellent). All of them are church schools, and all of them really do have a church ethos. Our clergy are welcomed at all three schools, and more children receive religious leadership monthly from our clergy in schools than the total combined attendance of our churches on Sundays.

All three schools have Church appointed governors who play an active role in governing the school.

Woodstock CofE Primary School

www.woodstock.oxon.sch.uk c300 pupils. The school is currently building additional classrooms to accommodate the anticipated growth in demand. Ofsted rating of Good with Outstanding in parts. The Rector is automatically a Governor due to some historical reason. Matt Bodinham from WYT works here one afternoon a week

- Regular (weekly) collective worship taken by church leaders.
- Collective worship, celebration of Christian festivals in Church typically termly.
- Church support to help provide enriched Christian experiences for the children, such as Easter Experience, Open the Book, Prayer Space.
- Support for RE teaching about Christianity.
- Mentoring and pastoral support for staff and families in times of need.

Bladon CofE Primary School

www.bladon.oxon.sch.uk c100 pupils. Recent Ofsted inspection grade Good. The school is right next to St Martin's Church and on a Sunday allows parishioners to use the school playground to park in. Reverend Katie Jones is a governor.

- Lead regular (weekly) collective worship.
- Collective worship, celebration of Christian festivals in Church typically termly.
- Provide a strong Christian presence in the school.

Vickie Cook Head Teacher writes *"We have developed very strong links with the Church and the school really benefit from the Reverends coming in to lead collective worship once a week. The children enjoy exciting assemblies linked to our school values and Christian vision. We have also been lucky enough to have them work with our school worship team and help them to plan their own worship assembly which they delivered to the whole school. The school also attend the Church for our services through the year and it's great to see the Church full of parents and other family members at these times."*

The Marlborough CofE School

www.marlborough.oxon.sch.uk A secondary school with c1100 pupils including a 6th form and 150 staff. The school is currently building additional classrooms to accommodate the anticipated growth in demand. It has just been inspected and maintained its good status but will be reinspected to see if it is Outstanding. (i.e. they think it is but need to do a fuller inspection). Four foundation governors help guide the school and Matt Bodinham from WYT is employed here part time.

- Lead collective worship (whole school assemblies) for key times in the Anglican calendar - typically once a term.

- Provide a strong Christian presence in the school.
- Lead year 13 leavers service in Church.
- School carol service held in church sometimes.

Andrew Hanlan, Principal writes *"As a Church School, we enjoy a close and special relationship with our local church. We visit regularly, and events at the church form part of both our curriculum offer and our annual calendar. We enjoy visits from the local rector into the school, who plays an important role as a governor, delivering whole school assemblies and being a regular supporter of the work of our Chaplaincy Team. We are keen to maintain and grow this important relationship between church and school, as we work to fulfil our school vision which is based on Matthew 5:16, "let your light shine."*

St Mary Magdalene's, Church Building

The building is a grade II* listed building. As a building the church includes work from several different periods. Originally the church was built at the end of the 12th century (Henry II) as a chapel of ease in what is now the south-east corner of the Nave. It was rebuilt in the 14th century and the chancel, and first Tower added later.

The south door (external) is a fine example of Norman design; the font can be dated to the early 14th century and was restored to the church during the Victorian restoration-it was discovered being used as a bird bath in a local garden. There are carved capitals on the south aisle pillars depicting real people from Woodstock in the 14th century and possibly earlier.

The west tower was built in 1784-86 replacing an earlier tower which had collapsed. It houses a peal of eight bells (recently reframed) and a clock mechanism dated 1792 with a celebrated carillon playing popular tunes from the late 18th century.

A major restoration took place under architect Blomfield in 1877-8 when the north aisle was added together with the chancel arch and north nave arcades, all at a cost of about £7,000. There are many stone memorials in the south aisle, a number of which are of interest, including one to Dr William Mavor (Rector 1810-1837), adjacent to the south door and another to Captain James King, Rector 1777-1801, who accompanied Captain Cook on his global circumnavigation. There are two notable brass monuments, firstly to Richard Bailey (d. 1461) and secondly to Jerome Keyt (d. 1631), fellow of St John's College.

All of the stained glass (save for a 14th century fragment reset in the vestry in 1884) is 19th century and is of local interest. The west window is a gift of Dr Mavor and the east window (Burlison and Grylls) is the gift of the 8th Duke of Marlborough in 1883 and commemorating the ministry of Arthur Majendie (Rector 1876-1895).

The later 20th century has seen the creation of 3 rooms and a lavatory in the far east of the north aisle replacing the old vestry and organ chamber. In addition, the chancel screen was moved to the west end of the nave in 1999.

In 2017 the church was closed for 6 months, and major refurbishment was completed costing £600,000. This work included new electrics, lighting, heating, toilets, seating, audio visual systems and complete redecoration. Wi-Fi is available throughout the building. This work enables the church to be a wonderfully flexible space for worship, and in addition is a community hub hosting events of every kind, including the Harvest Lunch. In 2022 the stained-glass windows were repaired and cleaned.

The lead roof is coming to the end of its life and leaks when it is wet, and we have driving rain. Permissions to replace the lead with insulated tern coated steel roof are underway, a DAC faculty has been received along with planning permission. It is currently estimated that the project will require £160,000. A fundraising campaign started in November 2022 and raised £65,000 internally so far and £55,000 from grants, primarily from Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust.(We have three grant bodies who we believe will fill the gap that we are currently in the process of applying for funds).

Below picture is a benefice wide Ceilidh with a fish and chip supper held in Dec 2023 with 105 people attending.



St Martin's, Bladon Church Building

There has been a church on the site since the 11th century. By 1800 the old medieval church was becoming dilapidated and dangerous. Permission was granted for the church to be demolished, and the 4th Duke of Marlborough paid for building materials for the new church, which was opened in 1804. The present Church was remodelled in 1891 by A.W. Blomfield with changes to the chancel, nave, and windows and the adding of pinnacles to the tower. The tower houses a peal of 6 bells, and the church clock which was installed in 1887 to mark Queen Victoria's golden jubilee. The interior of the church is noted for its windows and memorials. On the south side is a stained-glass window showing St Michael and St George, given by Consuelo, wife of the 9th Duke of Marlborough in memory of her son Ivor. The adjacent Churchill window was installed in 2015 to mark the 50th anniversary of Sir Winston Churchill's death. It was unveiled by HRH the Duchess of Cornwall (now HRH Queen Camilla). The garter banner of Lady Mary Soames hangs above the vestry. There is a fine 1906 pipe organ, situated in the north side of the chancel, which was dismantled in 2021 and rebuilt in 2022. Picture of it being repaired.



A major feature of our church is the churchyard, which was closed to new burials in 2005. Alongside many 18th century graves we have the grave of Sir Winston Churchill and the graves of many members of his family. Visitors from all over the world come to the grave, and we try to make the visit as meaningful as possible by supplying information about the Churchill family and providing material to remind them that our main mission is Christian worship and service. While we are grateful for the unfailing generosity of the many visitors, Bladon Church for them is a place of pilgrimage to the grave of a great man; for us, the people of the village, it is primarily, as it has been for centuries, the parish church.

A memorial peace garden with a stone bench is being planned for a wild part of the churchyard, with more plantings of snowdrops and daffodils.

The Rectory, Rectory Lane, Woodstock, OX20 1UQ

The rectory is only three minutes' walk from St Mary Magdalene, near the church but not immediately obvious and only 2.5 miles drive to St Martin's. All the Woodstock town amenities and excellent schools are within walking distance. The view from the French windows in the dining room are stunning looking across Blenheim estate over the lake to the Grand Bridge. What Winston Churchill described as "the finest view in England" (see picture below). Free walking passes for Blenheim Park (only) are available to Woodstock residents.

The study can be reached via the porch, is a bit of an awkward shape and therefore not great for meetings, but there is the vestry and the upper room in St Mary Magdalene church for meetings.

The rectory is a modern home built in a traditional Cotswold stone comprising of drawing room, dining room, study, kitchen, utility, and downstairs WC. Upstairs comprises 4 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. Outside is an integral garage and ample parking. The gardens are low maintenance mainly laid to lawn and overlook Blenheim. EPC energy rating of C.

The carpets were replaced in February 2024 in the study, entrance hall, sitting room, dining room, hall, stairs and landing and 2 of the bedrooms and at the same time the walls have been redecorated in the end bedroom, shower room, sitting room, dining room, downstairs WC, study, hall, stairs and landing. The bookcases in the study have been removed and the Diocese has told us there will be a grant for new bookcases for the new Rector.



School Year issue

The Churchwardens are concerned that if a new rector and his/her family need to be settled in the area for the new school year that the timing of the availability of the rectory could disrupt schooling. (The diocese has let the rectory for 6 months starting on the 8th March 2024). The Churchwardens have agreed (along with the PCCs) to arrange and pay for Air BnB furnished accommodation (probably in Bladon) for upto 2 months to enable the family to settle into a new school year if required.

Rectory plans and pictures



Floor plan produced in accordance with RICS Property Measurement Standards.
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