

The Beacon Benefice



*The parishes of Cranham, Edge, Harescombe with Brookthorpe,
Painswick, Pitchcombe and Sheepscombe*



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The Beacon Benefice

Comprising the parishes of Cranham, Edge, Harescombe with Brookthorpe, Painswick, Pitchcombe and Sheepscombe

Harescombe – St John the Baptist



Cranham – St James the Great



Edge – St John the Baptist



Pitchcombe – St John the Baptist



Painswick – St Mary's



Sheepscombe – St John the Apostle



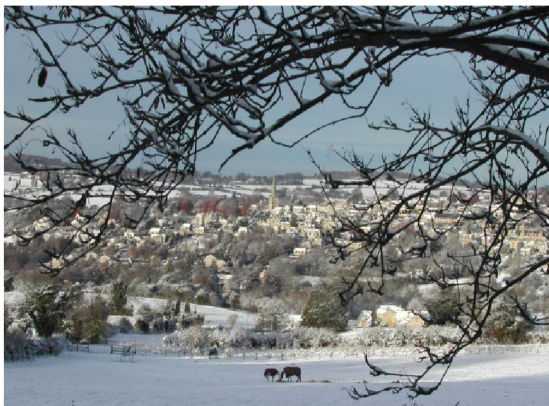
The Beacon Benefice

The Parishes of Cranham, Edge, Harescombe with Brookthorpe, Painswick, Pitchcombe and Sheepscombe

- The Beacon Benefice lies in a picturesque part of the Cotswolds, near the edge of the Cotswold escarpment, and approximately 5 to 10 miles south-east of Gloucester. An area popular with walkers, the Cotswold Way runs through it bringing many visitors.
- A rural Benefice comprising six churches in seven village parishes it is situated within easy access of Stroud and Cheltenham. The largest village is Painswick, and Sheepscombe has shared its vicar since 1977. Cranham joined the group in 1996, with Edge, Harescombe with Brookthorpe and Pitchcombe incorporated in to the Benefice in 2001.
- This vacancy has arisen following the retirement of the previous Vicar.
- Our Benefice website can be found at <http://www.beaconbenefice.org.uk/>. The Church Wardens are aware that it needs updating and is an area that could benefit with guidance from the Diocesan Communications Team.
- In the latest Benefice Profile exercise conducted by Stroud Deanery in 2016 60% of our approximately 4000 residents were found to be over the age of 45 (25% 45-60 and 35% 60+). The majority of our population comprises those from a professional or skilled worker background, with some from a farming background particularly in Harescombe.
- Of the three primary schools in the Benefice, Cranham's is a VA Church of England school (57 pupils), the other two being The Croft in Painswick (140) and Sheepscombe School(50+).



Vicarage and People



The Vicarage

- The Vicarage is a modern detached 4 bedroom family-sized home with garage and an office to which there is independent access. Set in a quiet cul-de-sac and surrounded by garden, it is just five minutes' walk from the church in Painswick. Painswick has a primary school, doctors' surgery, dentist, pharmacy, post office, library, small supermarket and two hairdressers. There are also two pubs, a luxury hotel, two cafes and two bistro-type restaurants along with a Golf Club with a restaurant open to the public, tennis courts, rugby club, cricket club and two bowls clubs.

The Office

- The Benefice also has an office based in the Lychgate on the edge of Painswick Churchyard, including a small room for around six people to meet, along with the usual office equipment and broadband internet connection. The part-time paid Benefice Administrator is based here.

The Team

- The clergy and Reader team for the Benefice consists of Rev Andrew Leach, as Associate Priest (NSM) and Mike Campbell and Sue Hartley as Readers. There are three retired priests with permission to officiate and one Reader Emeritus on whom the Benefice is gratefully dependent even outside the Vacancy. Rev Canon Michael Irving is always willing to help out when he is available. Rev David Newell conducts a bi-monthly week-day service at Richmond Village (care home and retirement village in Painswick) and is able to provide holiday cover for other services whilst Rev Chris Garrett currently commits to two services per month. Sue Stanley is Reader Emeritus - she takes a monthly week-day service at Resthaven Care Home (Pitchcombe) and leads the occasional Evensong or Morning Prayer.
- There is also a Benefice Wedding Co-ordinator who works across the Benefice churches. Amongst her duties she arranges and attends Marriage Preparation day courses.



Youth and Children

PSALMS

With ageing congregations across the Benefice, the youth and children's work in the Benefice has been carried out by PSALMS (Putting Sport Alongside Local Ministries - <https://psalms.uk.net>), established here in 2005, who work with our local schools and our wider communities with the support of all our churches (both financial and practical). Given today's challenge of engaging with young people, PSALMS has pioneered a fresh expression of church with an emphasis on sports ministry, seeking to introduce them to Christ in a way which is relevant and accessible. Amongst other activities, they offer lunchtime clubs at the Croft and Cranham schools (yrs 4-6 Pulsar), take assemblies, run an annual faith-based sports' games session in which KS2 children from all three schools participate (Pulse Games), operate a weekly youth club for yrs 7-9 at Painswick Rec (Club Pulse) and a 12 month Bible-based discipleship and leadership course for teenagers (Pulse Leadership Academy). In 2017, 41 children attended age-appropriate residential camps. Every month, the PSALMS team lead a prayer and praise service at Cranham, and this is currently being trialled at Painswick's Praise service. The vicar is a vital link between the Benefice and PSALMS and has to-date been a member of the Local Ministry Group; this is something we would wish to continue as we develop further exciting ways of engaging with our young people.



Messy Church

Currently run in Painswick church by volunteers from several churches in the Benefice, with the support of PSALMS, we are encouraged as they build up a group of families who engage with the material, the relationships and the structure of the monthly event. We hope to develop these relationships further as we invite the families to the Praise service in Cranham and consider sustainable ways of offering more discipleship to the parents.



Schools

Each of the schools use their local churches for special services or celebrations and the links between the churches and schools are generally good. Local church members support PSALMS in their work with the schools and teams of volunteers take Open the Book into all of our schools weekly or fortnightly during term time. Links with The Croft and Cranham schools are well-established, and we are working alongside PSALMS in developing the link with Sheepscombe School which has for some years been resistant to church involvement (other than OTB visits). A member of the clergy has historically been a governor at Cranham CofE School, and this is a role that both the school and their PCC would be keen to see continue.



The Parish of St James the Great, Cranham



Cranham is located in a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Church buildings date from the 15th century and thanks to the efforts of over 70 volunteers, buildings, churchyard and administration of the church are in 'good order'.

Cranham has been described by Gloucestershire County Council as a "vibrant village" with a strong community sense and with a high level of mutual support amongst residents. As well as the Church of England school, there are two pubs, a Village Hall and a large Recreation Ground. There are 25 clubs and societies, weekly coffee mornings and a monthly village lunch. Cranham is the home of the county's main scout centre and a large scout troupe traditionally attend the Remembrance Day service in the church. Details of all church services and events, PSALMS and Benefice news, along with the monthly letter from the vicar are published with other community news in the Cranham Village Magazine. In order to appeal to a congregation with a wide age range, Cranham has introduced a variety of service patterns to encourage accessibility for both younger and older members of the parish. In addition to the popular Cranham Praise service led by PSALMS, there is a monthly family communion service. The link with PSALMS is strongly valued by the Parish and people are keen to see it develop and grow.

According to a recent survey the most valued features of the Church are its friendly and welcoming congregation, the variety and regularity of services, and its role in bringing the community together at major services for occasions such as the Cranham Feast, Remembrance Day etc. The continuation of strong links between the church and the school, in which the vicar has traditionally played a major role, is considered of high importance. According to our survey, the most important qualities sought in a vicar are an interest in people and a commitment to pastoral care.

A successful Freewill Offering Scheme and cash donations, provide an adequate income to meet day to day running costs, allowing an annual surplus without the need for additional fundraising events (currently). A Quinquennial Review took place in 2015/16 and all recommended works were completed. Significant reserves are held to cover future anticipated Quinquennial survey costs and for other unforeseen expenses. A project is underway to install a toilet in the church grounds that we expect to be fundable mainly from reserves and grants, although fundraising is also planned.



The Parish of St John the Baptist, Edge

Edge church, 2 miles west of Painswick, was built by local gentry in 1856 and lies between Pitchcombe to the south and Harescombe with Brookthorpe to the north. It is in a highly visible location on a busy junction on the main commuter route between Stroud and Gloucester. The Quinquennial report of 2016 found that Edge church is fairly well maintained; there is an ongoing maintenance programme, and kitchen and toilet facilities have been recently added.

Currently we have two regular services a month, one of which is a communion service the other a family or theme service; in addition we have usual festival services such as Easter & Christmas. The congregation for the most part consists of professionals. Although we have worked hard to draw in children to our family service this is not proving too successful due to the lack of children now living in our village. Our style of worship is welcoming, inclusive and hospitable, with a strong community focus, demonstrated by the number of people who stay behind after the service to enjoy tea, coffee and cake, whilst catching up with friends and neighbours.

Our strength is involving the community in our initiatives. Three years ago we started a monthly "Natter Group" for the elderly and disenfranchised within the community which has proved popular with an average of 20 attendees. The PCC of Edge also runs various community activities including Flix in the Stix (a community cinema project), Flower & Art festivals and Open Gardens which are all well supported by the local community. We are keen to encourage clergy to attend these events where possible. Edge, along with Pitchcombe and Harescombe with Brookthorpe share a community magazine, Village Voices, in which a monthly letter from the vicar along with details of all services and church activities, plus those of PSALMS, are included.

Edge church pays its Parish Share and contributes towards mutual support, as well as financially contributing to the excellent work being done by PSALMS within the Benefice. Our income has exceeded our expenditure over the last two years as we are saving up for the next phase of our ongoing maintenance programme. We are exceedingly lucky to benefit from a very supportive Trust operating in our community whose surpluses can only be distributed on a 50/50 basis to both Pitchcombe and Edge churches.



The Parish of St John the Baptist, Harescombe



Harescombe is located to the west of the Cotswold escarpment. It is a very rural community of busy farmers, some of whose families have lived in the parish for generations, and professionals working locally. The parish of Harescombe with Brookthorpe was formed several years ago when St Swithun's Church, Brookthorpe, was closed for regular worship (it is now the responsibility of the Historic Churches Trust), though the parish remains responsible for the upkeep of the graveyard. Whilst St Swithun's is now closed, clergy from the Benefice continue to lead a monthly communion service at Brookthorpe Hall Care Home. The PCC is made up from regular worshippers who live in either Harescombe or Brookthorpe. St John's church, consecrated in 1315, is surrounded by fields in a beautiful rural setting. One of its two bells is said to be oldest in Gloucestershire.

The 3 parish communion once a month attracts about 10 communicants. Morning prayer once a month is a simpler service with fewer attendees. Our regular congregation is elderly and loyal, but we are joined by our local farming and young families for special services. The church of St John is a beautiful, quiet and very spiritual building in which many people find solace. Some months ago during a visit by the Beacon Mission Team there was discussion about the possibility of using the church for a Benefice-led retreat and whilst this has not yet happened, it could be worth pursuing with the new Vicar. The beautiful setting of the church and churchyard makes it popular for weddings, christenings and funerals. Harvest, carol and Easter services are all well attended and bring the community together along with other community village events such as BBQs, quiz nights, social groups, fish suppers and litter pick.

Collections are low as attendance is low but the village does get involved in fundraising. A generous legacy dating from the 1960s means that church funds are healthy. Fairly major roof and damp work was carried out in 2012/2013 and the church is now in relatively good repair.



The Parish of St Mary, Painswick

Known as the 'Queen of the Cotswolds' Painswick has St. Mary's Church at its heart. The church dates from 1377 and has since been extended and reordered right up to the 19th Century. The churchyard is famous for its 99 yew trees dating back to the 18th Century and has many listed gravestones; people come from all over the world to track down their ancestors. The Church tower houses a nationally recognised peal of 14 bells, most of which date back to 1686.

St Mary's offers a variety of styles of worship, aimed at encouraging a wider demographic in the congregation. A robed choir, led by our Director of Music and organist, sings at the two traditional holy communion services, whilst a community choir sings at the informal communion service. Painswick Praise is our least formal service and has recently been led by PSALMS. Many families attend Messy Church at St Mary's once a month, but we otherwise do not have many in the congregation under the age of 50. We are keen to support and develop work with families and young people in addition to work already being carried out by PSALMS and Open the Book teams.

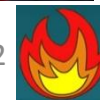
A Local Mission Group continues to support clergy and is involved in the running of some of the services, especially at Easter, Christmas and Clypping. In addition, the Lay Pastoral Assistant, Delyth Allen, supports the Vicar in pastoral care where appropriate.

Painswick is a very vibrant village and offers at least 50 different activities and clubs covering all age groups. Many social activities take place in the church and churchyard, including concerts, playgroup Easter egg hunt, afternoon tea parties for charity, the annual Painswick Feast and the 'Clypping' Service. The Church rooms are used by the whole village and beyond for social events as well as church meetings.

St Mary's is a very welcoming church to our congregation, visitors to services and to the many tourists who come to the church from all over the world. Many hours are spent talking with tourists and people who live in the village and giving them information about the church's history and present day services.

In 2017 the PCC income from all sources was £196,161 including approximately £60,000 in legacies. Expenditure was £139,700, which included the Parish Share, the cost of a roof alarm and many minor repairs due to rain damage. A re-ordering scheme initially considered several years ago is still being discussed by a sub-committee of the PCC. Upkeep of the churchyard came under review due to falling standards and the resulting decision to employ Leyhill Prison workers to carry out the work has proved to be very successful.

There is a church hall with small and large meeting rooms, plus kitchen, on the edge of the churchyard. It is available for church use, and is hired out throughout the week to several organisations. It currently breaks even financially.



The Parish of St John the Baptist, Pitchcombe



Built in 1819, St John's is a small Grade II-listed Victorian church, set in a stunningly beautiful churchyard, with a large car park and the village hall adjacent. Huge improvements via re-ordering have been completed in the last 10 years, and we plan further improvements to make better use of the building when finances permit.

At present we have two Holy Communion Services a month; one of which is from the BCP. We regularly put on specially themed services with relevant biblical and non-biblical readings together with hymns and some of us would also like to have a lay-led non-liturgical service once a month. We are encouraged that the numbers at our services have been growing in recent years and we would like to see this continue. At our BCP Holy Communion we are joined by several residents from Richmond (the retirement home in Painswick).

Pitchcombe is a small village with about 125 dwellings and 300 parishioners, the majority of whom are middle-aged. There is no school, shop or pub; hence the importance of the church as a focal point in the village. We have few children in the parish, though numbers are increasing. None attend the church services.

The PCC is active in supporting the local community with regular coffee mornings with a speaker, concerts, and an annual Flower Festival that is renowned. We would like to do more, once we can take out more pews. We are a collection point for The Food bank and work closely with Marah.

We are warm and welcoming to all, reaching out to the whole village, church-goers and non-churchgoers alike. We would like to be able to work more closely with other organisations in the village and strengthen our ties with Richmond Retirement Home, as well as engaging with the younger members of our community.

Our finances are sound. We have a reasonable number of standing orders from both church-goers and non-church-goers alike and have always paid our Parish Share in full. The latest Quinquennial Inspection (2015) showed that we need to re-roof the whole church, repair masonry and address major damp problems at a cost of £160,000. Having set up a special Appeal fund, we have had magnificent support from the whole community and have raised £115,000 through donations, very successful fund-raising events and various grant applications. We continue to fund-raise and apply for grants, hoping to start work in the summer. Our fund-raising activities have certainly raised the profile of the church in our local community and have drawn the whole village together.



The Parish of St John the Apostle, Sheepscombe

Sheepscombe is a beautiful small Cotswold village at the head of a wooded valley. The population is just over 600, with a high proportion of professional and retired professional people and about 20 young families with children. It also has more than its fair share of artists, builders, woodworkers and musicians. The Sheepscombe News is published monthly by the Sheepscombe Society and carries both village and church news, with a regular Vicar's message.

St. John's is situated half way up one side of the valley and is visible to almost the whole village. Built in 1820 in "Godless" Sheepscombe as a Chapel of Rest attached to Painswick, it was extended in 1873. In good repair with pew seating for around 80 people, any maintenance issues are dealt with promptly. There is a kitchenette in the south-east corner and a toilet immediately outside with good disabled access to all. Some re-wiring will have to be undertaken soon. A new Viscount electronic organ was installed in 2017 and is enjoyed by a rota of four organists with others available if needed. Many villagers, both church-goers and not, help on the flower, cleaning and mowing rotas.

We have an effective Local Mission Group of seven who lead monthly Sunday services, weekly Morning Prayer and special services such as Mothering Sunday, Carol, and Crib and Christingle services. Most of them are also part of the Beacon Mission Team. They, with other members of the congregation, take Open The Book into the local school weekly, help with Messy Church in Painswick, host Autumn and Lent house groups and organize the Advent Posada journey round the village, in addition to welcoming newcomers and keeping in touch with pastoral needs in this close and caring village.

We are a friendly, welcoming group of people who play a full part in the local community and hope to continue building on that to encourage more villagers, of all ages, to join us on a Sunday by introducing some new forms of worship, having more services outside the church building and encouraging organisations such as PSALMS, to attract a younger age-group.

We support PSALMS financially and they occasionally take services in the church. Regular Church income and expenditure are broadly balanced. We have some reserves invested in Church of England funds and are generously supported by the village as a whole when funding is required for major capital projects. We participate in the Parish Giving Scheme run by the Diocese and pay our Parish Share promptly and in full; we aim to give 10% of our unrestricted income to the charities we choose each year.



Working Together (1/2)

PCCs and Finance

Each of the six parishes has a functioning PCC with two church wardens and a Treasurer. The Wardens meet monthly with the Vicar to discuss forthcoming services and any other relevant business.

In addition, for the first time in 2017 the Treasurers of each PCC met together with the Vicar to discuss and agree the Parish Share along with the level of financial support for PSALMS. It was unanimously regarded as a good process and one which we would be keen to continue in future years. Each church is responsible for its own finances; a mixture of free-will offerings, envelope schemes and the Diocesan Parish Giving Scheme is used across the Benefice. Shared costs e.g. the benefice office running costs, clergy expenses are paid by the Painswick PCC and the other five parishes reimburse Painswick PCC on a quarterly basis. The Parish Share for 2017 was £110,052.

Beacon Mission Team

This group was set up at the end of 2015 with representatives invited from across the Benefice. It meets every two months for discussion and training (from a variety of sources) on how best to develop as a Benefice-wide ministry team providing support for clergy and our congregations. Recently, the team has adopted a mission statement derived from the Gloucester Diocese LIFE Vision reflecting those areas of mission seen by the team as most important in our Benefice. The team currently comprises 18 members from three of our churches. Since the start of the vacancy we have been following an LICC discipleship course. Unfortunately, communication about the purpose and scope of the team has not always been as clear as it could be so plans include meeting with the Wardens to discuss how we can best work together as originally envisaged, and in so doing to encourage participation in the team by representatives from those churches not currently engaged. There are many members of our congregations who are willing to serve and we now just need to join up the dots!



Working Together (2/2)

Beacon Light newsletter

The Benefice office produces a weekly newsletter which is distributed to each church providing details of services across the Benefice as well as news about events and courses of interest to the congregations. In addition, each village community has its own newsletter or magazine.

Home groups, Lent & Advent groups

Several home groups operate throughout the Benefice which are open to people from any of the six congregations. Additional groups sometimes run during Lent and Advent.

Churches Together Around Painswick

Our ecumenical association of all the Christian churches within the Beacon Benefice at present comprises Anglican, Roman Catholic and Society of Friends. A small committee of representatives from the Churches organises several events every year to bring church members together for ecumenical services, to mark occasions such as Church Unity Week, Women's World Day of Prayer, Good Friday Procession of Witness and Week of Prayer for World Peace.

Christian Aid

Most of our parish churches are represented on the Painswick Valley Christian Aid Committee together with the Quakers and the United Reform Church. As well as during Christian Aid week, they are active in organising fund-raising at other times of the year, particularly in response to disaster appeals. The total raised in the past year is in excess of £14000.



Beacon Benefice Profile (Data)

	Edge	Cranham	Harescombe	Painswick	Pitchcombe	Sheepscombe
Population	180	490	232	2119	300	600
Electoral Roll	29	35	30	135	31	50
Av. Sunday attendance	15-25	25 + 2 children	5-10	50-100	25	20-30
% Electoral Roll living outside the Parish	15%	20%	10-20%	5%	10-20%	25%
3 Parish Communion	25	N/A	12+	N/A	25	N/A
Special Services in 2017						
Easter	40+	50-60	27	200	30	44
Remembrance	40+	100+	N/A	140	28	41
Christmas Day	40+	50-60	37	250	18	106
Other	Crib Service 40+	PSALMS Praise 20yp & children	Crib 23 Carols49	Clypping 1000+,Crib 240 Carols 250	Carols 120 Flower Fest 80	Crib/Christingle 142, Mothering Sunday 26
Occasional Services in 2017						
Baptisms	1	0	1	6	1	0
Weddings	0	6	0	15	1	1
Funerals & Interment of Ashes	2 + 2 (4)	6	2	32	2	2+2 (4)
School Roll	N/A	57	N/A	140	N/A	50+



Benefice Service Pattern 2018 (incl. PSALMS)

	Cranham	Edge	Harescombe	Painswick	Pitchcombe	Sheepscombe
1 st Sunday	11am: Family Communion	9.30am: Three Parish Communion		9.30am: Parish Communion		11am: Morning Worship
2 nd Sunday	11am: PSALMS Praise Service 6.30pm: Evensong (BCP)			9.30am: Holy Communion – Sharing in One Bread	9.30am: Three Parish Communion	11am: Parish Communion
3 rd Sunday	11am: Parish Communion		9.30am: Three Parish Communion	9.30am: Parish Communion		11am: Morning Worship (lay-led)
4 th Sunday	6.30pm: Evening Worship (lay-led)	11am: Family Praise	11am: Morning Prayer	9.30am: Painswick Praise	9.30am: Holy Communion (BCP)	11am: Parish Communion
5 th Sunday	10am: Benefice Service – moves around the Parishes					
Weekday Worship	9am: 2 nd Tuesday Morning Worship (lay-led)	9.30am: 1 st Monday Prayer in Edge (lay-led)	2pm: 3 rd Thursday Holy Communion (Brookthorpe Hall Care Centre)	11am: 1 st Wednesday Holy Communion (Richmond Village) 5pm: 3 rd Wednesday Evening Worship (lay-led)	11.30am: 2 nd Monday Holy Communion (Resthaven Care Home)	9.30am: Each Thursday Morning Worship (lay-led)

Note: Additionally, before the start of the vacancy, Painswick had 8am BCP Communion on 2nd and 4th Sundays. There was also a Benefice Weekday Communion held in Pitchcombe, Sheepscombe, Painswick and Cranham on a rotating basis.

Note: All services are from Common Worship unless otherwise stated.

