

**DIOCESE OF ST EDMUNDSBURY AND IPSWICH**

**BENEFICE  
PROFILE  
2010**

**THE BOX RIVER BENEFICE**

**ST MARY, BOXFORD  
ST MARY THE VIRGIN, EDWARDSTONE  
ST BARTHOLOMEW, GROTON  
ST LAWRENCE, LITTLE WALDINGFIELD  
ALL SAINTS', NEWTON GREEN**

## **1 THE COMMUNITY**

The Box River Benefice offers an opportunity to live in a very beautiful part of Suffolk as part of a vibrant community. It is situated in a delightful area – close to the famous tourist centres of “Constable Country” and Lavenham – but quieter and pleasantly unspoilt. The benefice is mainly rural but larger centres of population are easily accessible. Bury St Edmunds, Colchester, Ipswich are all within 40 minutes drive, Cambridge about an hour, and London is only 60 miles away, with a good train service from Colchester. Boxford provides a centre for the benefice with shops, a garage, post office, GP surgery and other amenities. The small town of Hadleigh and the market town of Sudbury are both accessible by bus from Boxford.

### **1.1 POPULATION**

The total estimated population at 2007 was:

Boxford: 1270

Edwardstone: 350

Groton: 270

Little Waldingfield: 380

Newton Green: 510

### **1.2 HOUSING**

As at the 2001 census the breakdown of housing was as follows. Many of the houses in the benefice are very old – a number dating from 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Boxford: 537 dwellings, old village centre houses & more recent private and local authority estates, including sheltered housing. 11% social housing (Council/housing association)

Edwardstone: 149 dwellings – 9% social housing

Groton: 94 dwellings, 5% social housing. (since this census 15 “affordable” houses have been built within the parish)

Little Waldingfield: 148 dwellings, 11% social housing

Newton Green: 213 dwellings, 13% social housing

### **1.3 EMPLOYMENT**

Across the benefice a high proportion commute to work, in London, Colchester, Ipswich etc. Many young professional and managerial people have recently moved into the area. There are also many local small businesses – electricians, plumbers, builders etc. In Boxford there are local shops including a post office. Newton Green has a golf course and a farm shop. Each of the parishes has a public house (Boxford has two). All of these provide employment for local people. Whilst agriculture dominates the landscape a relatively small number are now actively involved in farming. There are however, several well established farming families in the benefice.

#### **1.4 SCHOOLS**

There are two schools in the benefice - a CEVC primary school (3 - 9 years) in Boxford which has 180 pupils. This is a very popular and successful school obtaining almost all Grade 1 (outstanding) in the 2008 Ofsted inspection. There is also a very small (12 pupils) Montessori school in Newton Green. Children from across the benefice travel to Boxford for primary schooling. Some children in Little Waldingfield attend the CEVC primary school in Great Waldingfield. Suffolk maintains a 3 tier system (currently under review); there is a middle school in Stoke-by-Nayland and older children are served by a good choice of schools in the area.

#### **1.5 OTHER COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS**

A First Responders Team covers the whole area providing vital rapid response to medical emergencies.

Boxford: Parish Council, Community Council, Boxford Society, drama group, Guides, Scouts, Cubs, sports clubs, playing field, tennis courts, bowls club, Over 60s, rambles, WI, Friends of Boxford School, toddlers group, village hall, two public houses

Edwardstone: Over 60s club, parish hall, village inn and micro brewery, Edwardstone Charities, Millennium Green, Parish council  
Groton: Parish Council, Groton Educational Fund (charity), Croft management (local land maintenance), public house, village hall

Little Waldingfield: Playing field committee, parish room committee, parish council, public house, Over 60s  
Newton Green: Village Hall, over 60s club, playing field, youth forum – meets twice a year to discuss their ideas for the village, public house, Sports Field, including play equipment, Keep Fit Club, Art Club, Monthly Coffee Mornings in Village Hall and numerous functions, Neighbourhood Watch, Good Neighbours Scheme

And others to be found listed in the *Box River News*

#### **1.6 MARY'S HOUSE**

Mary's House, in Boxford, which is owned by Groton PCC but used by all, provides a centre for the benefice. The house, bought from a wonderful gift to the church, provides a great opportunity for ministry and mission. Many benefice meetings (both church related and others) are held in Mary's house, and the house is open every morning during the week for coffee, and a chat. On Wednesday mornings an informal communion service is held, which has a small but loyal following. Fund raising events and occasional art exhibitions are also held there. Upstairs there is an office for the incumbent and another small room, which provide an ideal accessible setting for meeting informally with parishioners and maintaining a visible presence in the benefice.

## **1.7 OTHER FACTORS**

- The Box River Benefice came together 10 years ago and in that time has become increasingly united. The Benefice Council ( a “Think Tank” of representatives from each PCC) and the Ministry team which both operate across the benefice have helped to bring a unity of purpose. Bringing together one large parish and four small ones was a struggle at first but all have worked to make it a success. There is however potential and enthusiasm to develop this further.
- There is the opportunity for secretarial and administrative support for the incumbent.
- The *Box River News*, produced monthly and delivered free to every house in the benefice (and beyond) includes church news.
- We are fortunate to have the services of a number of organists. Boxford has its own organist/ choir master and he occasionally plays elsewhere in the benefice. Newton has its own organist. The other three parishes are served by a number of organists who take it in turns to play at services.
- There is an active team of bell ringers which regularly rings around the benefice and elsewhere and which encourages ringers from other parts of the country to visit.
- The ad hoc benefice choir supports the celebration of special services across the Benefice

## 2.1 CHURCH BUILDINGS

All five churches are very different but all very beautiful and in good condition. All are Grade 1 listed except for Newton Green which is Grade 2\*.

### Boxford:



St Mary's is a church of outstanding interest, both inside and out. Boxford was one of the wealthy 15<sup>th</sup> century cloth-producing villages, and it still has that healthy urban quality. St Mary's church is in the centre of the village presenting its north face to the village, but its grandest aspect is from the south. The north porch is perhaps Suffolk's finest 14<sup>th</sup> century wooden porch, and

the oldest part of the external structure. The south porch, however, is one of the county's grandest 15<sup>th</sup> century affairs, in bright Caen stone. Above these porches, the 14<sup>th</sup> century tower rises, a century older than the church against it. Perhaps it would have been rebuilt, if the Reformation had not intervened. Still, it is elegant, decorated with grotesques, and topped by a wood and lead spire. Whether you enter from the north or the south you step into a bright, clean interior, the light from the clerestory filling the nave and aisles, the only colour coming from the glass of the east window. This window, considered of national importance, is by Rosemary Rutherford, and depicts the Transfiguration in flowing chunks of colour, which lends the chancel an air of mystery, giving it a feeling of devotion and prayer.

The interior of the church is of great interest, and perhaps the most famous object here is the striking 17<sup>th</sup> century font cover. Inside, there are painted ribbons with quotes from St John's Gospel. Two are taken from Nicodemus' question and Christ's answer: *How can a man be borne which is olde?* and *Except a man be borne of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.*

The other is from the Last Supper: Christ's answer, when Peter baulks at Christ washing his feet: *If I wash the(e) not thou hast no part with me.* The south aisle chapel has niches either side of the east window, with remains of wallpaintings. St Edmund is to the north of the altar. Boxford church has more than its fair share of intriguing post-Reformation memorials, some in brass, some in stone. Two that are particularly noteworthy are in the south aisle chapel. One is for Elizabeth Hyam, a remarkable woman who died at the age of 113 in 1748. We have no way of knowing how much this is an exaggeration, but she may well have been born in the reign of Charles I, and was perhaps the last person in Suffolk to remember the English Civil War. The other memorial is rather sad. It is a tiny brass, set in the floor. It is to David Birde, a Rector's son, who died at the age of a few months in 1606.

He lies in his bed, with two little shoes under it. This is an attractive church in a lovely village.

### **Edwardstone:**



The 13th Century church is set in the beautiful grounds of the Lowry-Corry state, overlooking the gently rolling countryside of the upper valley of the River Box. The churchyard is well maintained and the surrounding views are stunning. This all contributes to the peace and tranquillity both inside and outside of the church.

The church is never locked and attracts, and is appreciated by, many visitors from all over the world. Within the church there are some lovely features including the unusual brass to Benjamin and Elizabeth Brand, the ancestors of the founder of Morden College, Blackheath, which contributes so much to the upkeep of the church through the Dame Susan Brand Trust; thus we have a building which is both beautiful and structurally sound. Amongst other treasures is the reredos behind the altar, the wrought iron chandeliers, entwined with oak and maple leaves, the 17<sup>th</sup> century pulpit and a number of beautiful stained glass windows. In addition, the organ was restored in 1998 and the peal of six bells was restored in 1984.

The organ is by Martin, 1870, but some of the pipework originated in a late 17<sup>th</sup> century Father Smith organ, in the Sheldonian. Future plans include the provision of kitchen and toilet facilities. This church is a veritable jewel within the Suffolk countryside.

### **Groton:**



The simple 13<sup>th</sup> century church seats 110 and is at what is probably the centre of village – though Groton is a string of hamlets rather than one central village. The church shows evidence of the Winthrop links – windows dedicated to Winthrops and paid for by his American descendants – Winthrop tombs and even the arms of Massachusetts. In the churchyard is the oldest gravestone in Suffolk. The church is always open and

has many visitors from near and far. The church has a feeling of solidity and tradition but is not hidebound – the lighting in the church bears evidence of this! In 2007 extensive works were carried out on the tower including reinstating the original three section mullions – the church is structurally in very good condition. There are plans for a kitchen and toilet for the church. The organ is a Father Willis, from 1888. There are 5 bells, played by means of an intriguing mechanical chiming system. There is no church hall, but the village hall is about 1 mile from the church.

### **Little Waldingfield:**



The church was rebuilt in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century on a site that was registered in the Domesday book. The font is of an octagonal Suffolk type. In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century the North Porch was built and is now used as the Vestry. A Lady Chapel was created in 1993 in the south aisle. There is a memorial to Robert Appleton, one of the early settlers of Massachusetts. The organ is a Hart (1809) and

was moved here in 1989. For a small village the church is quite capacious. Unfortunately our peal of 5 bells need re hanging and they are currently unusable. The church is always open, sitting in the centre of the village, in well maintained surroundings. Visitors remark on its welcoming, simple, light and peaceful interior. The under seat heating is welcome in winter and at night the church is floodlit.

### **Newton Green:**



The church is 14<sup>th</sup> century and the large nave is in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust; chancel (seating 65) and vestry are used by village. As only the chancel is used, the church is intimate, welcoming, and bright and cheerful. The nave is opened up and used for special occasions – such as weddings and benefice services. There is a Communion service every month and either

Morning Prayer or Hymns and Readings for the second service of the month. The church is about a third of mile from village centre. There is no church hall but there is a Village hall. A peal of 5 bells is rung regularly.

## **2.2 CHURCH TRADITION**

Boxford: Central with traditional robed choir  
Edwardstone: Central  
Groton: Central  
Little Waldingfield: Central  
Newton Green: Central

## **2.3 CHURCH ATTENDANCE**

There is rota of services – the smaller parishes normally having 2 services per month on fixed Sundays in the month, while Boxford has a service every week. There is an approved scheme in place for Communion by Extension. These are average figures for the regular services. Considerably larger numbers attend for special occasions such as Christmas and Easter.

### Boxford

Family Service (Box River Club) 20-30  
Choral Evensong 30  
Holy Communion 8.00 am 10-12  
Holy Communion 11.00 am 35-45  
Matins 35-45

### Edwardstone

Holy Communion (BCP) 8.00 am 8-12  
Holy Communion (CW) 9:30 am 12-20+

### Groton

Holy Communion (BCP) 8.00 am 11  
Holy Communion (CW) 9:30 am 14

### Little Waldingfield

Holy Communion (BCP) 8.00 am 8-12  
Holy Communion (CW) 9.30 am 15-20

### Newton Green

All services 20-22