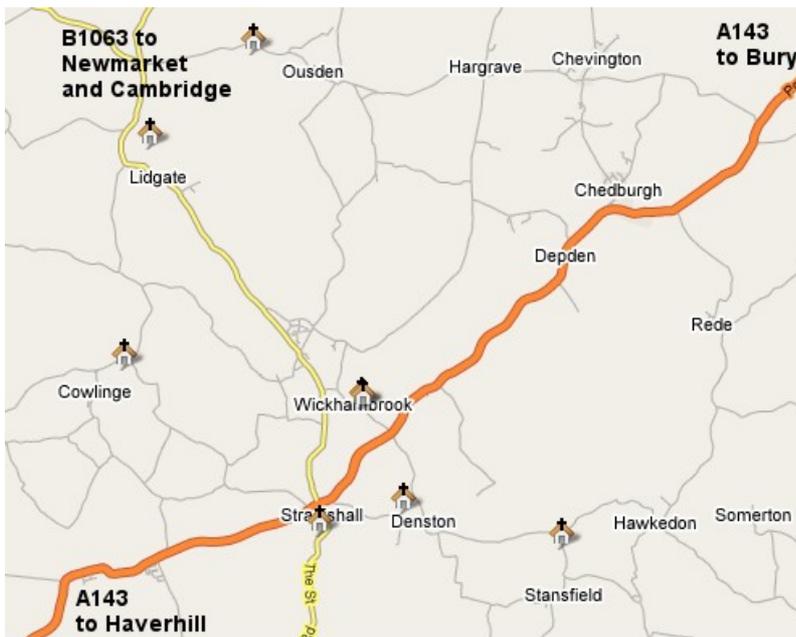




The Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich  
**The Bansfield Benefice**  
Suffolk

## Introduction

The Bansfield benefice is in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich and part of the Clare Deanery which covers southwest Suffolk and consists of 28 parishes, all in rural villages except for Clare and Haverhill.



There are at present four and a half stipendiary clergy serving this deanery. During Lent it has been the custom to hold deanery evensong services at different churches, with a notable preacher. For deanery details see <http://www.stedmundsbury.anglican.org/pages/mission/maps/clare.htm>. The seven churches of the benefice are annotated on the above map. The benefice hall and Vicarage are both next to Wickhambrook church.

## Geography

The Bansfield Benefice is very conveniently placed with easy access to many major towns and amenities. It is equi-distant from Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket and Haverhill (10 miles). Cambridge is 30 minutes away (25 miles). The major airport of Stansted is less than an hour's drive and London is just 49 miles away. There are good rail links to the capital and other regions from Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket and Cambridge.

## The Vicarage

The vicarage is situated next to All Saints' church Wickhambrook and is a detached house with study, kitchen, lounge, dining room, four bedrooms, bathroom and large garage. It is double glazed throughout and is set in a plot of about quarter of an acre within a conservation area of outstanding natural beauty. Heating is by oil and there is broadband connectivity. Church road itself is a quiet road which meets the A143 at its end with easy access to Bury St Edmunds, the Cathedral, Cathedral shop and a good selection of shops.



## Wickhambrook village

Wickhambrook, where the vicarage is situated, forms the nucleus of the benefice villages for most secular activities and contains many of the desired amenities. These include

- Doctor's surgery and dispensary
- Post Office
- Petrol station
- General shop
- Pub (Greyhound) <http://www.greyhoundwickhambrook.co.uk/>
- WI and Memorial Social Centre hall (150 capacity and used for many large functions)
- Primary school (five to nine - roll approximately 100) <http://www.wickhambrookschool.co.uk/>
- Six acres recreation ground including play ground, skateboard park, bowls and tennis facilities
- There are over 20 clubs and societies in the village <http://www.wickhambrook.org/clubs.htm>
- A very well maintained village website <http://www.wickhambrook.org/>

## The Benefice, its role, mission and history

Parishes of Cowlinge, Denston, Lidgate, Ousden, Stansfield, Stradishall & Wickhambrook

There are no more than 2500 people living in the whole of the Benefice parishes. Historically these seven parishes were distinct individual units originally having their own Parish Priest. In 1999 the two benefices were joined together to form the present Bansfield Benefice. In 2003 the Bansfield Benefice became a legal unit under act of Privy Council.

The area is mainly rural, agricultural and arable with cereal crops. Many people are retired, houses are increasingly expensive forcing young locals out of the area and bringing in mainly middle aged, wealthy and elderly retired people into the area. That being said there are many children in the area, the Primary school in Wickhambrook with

over 100 pupils (5-9years) and many attending independent schools as boarding and/or day pupils, many travelling out of the village on buses for post nine year Middle and Upper school education.

In Wickhambrook there are three places of worship, the Anglican parish church, the United Reformed Chapel and the Methodist church. In a nearby village (Kirtling) there is a Roman Catholic Church, and an independent free church in Denston. Apart from the latter, the church congregations gather on a regular basis to worship together, to raise funds for Christian Aid, TraidCraft and celebrate Christian Unity week events  
<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/benefice/churchestogether.html>.

The churches also meet together on a social basis regularly during the year. We hold a weekly study group on a Monday evening, studying various biblical and church topics. This is an ecumenical group of up to seventeen members.  
<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/benefice/study/>

The beginning of the year 2004 saw us begin to worship together on two Sundays of the month as one Benefice, the second and fourth Sundays at 10am, moving in turn to different churches. We also have two midweek services that rotate throughout the Benefice churches on Tuesdays and Thursdays.  
<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/benefice/services.html>

We supported an Ordinand in Training (Gill Green) now in her second year of ministry with the Stour Valley benefice (also within the Clare Deanery here in the diocese).  
<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/benefice/ordination.html>. We also have produced two students for the Vocation Year at DMC. Ann Jones and Angela Finn, are both in training for Lay Elder ministry with Angela now moved to Haverhill. We have one member going for ordination, Stuart Beaumont. Our Ministry Team continues to be strong with our Licensed Reader, Philip Draycott, and Elders Paul Bevan, Fiona Evans and John Dennis. A retired Priest, Rev. Bob Torrens, from Bury St. Edmunds, joins us twice a month to take services. The Benefice Ministry Team is a key component for the future growth of the Benefice. In order to balance the need for identifying the Christian community as a Benefice we are also seven individual parishes, distinctive and historical.

Worship leaders are the key to continuing with services at all the parish churches on two Sundays each month and participating in the two Benefice services each month.  
<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/benefice/wardens.html>. The Benefice has a small Benefice Music Group who sing and introduce some more modern songs into Benefice service worship on a regular basis. A Benefice Pastoral Team is being formed of which the Ministry Team will be the core members. Visiting, following up on Baptisms, weddings, funerals, visiting newcomers to the area, and general sick and housebound visiting is essential in building up the community of faith.

Individual parishes are working hard to support their churches and pay their part of the Benefice Share. Parishes are working hard to restore buildings. The Benefice Committee with members from all the constituent parish PCCs (usually the Wardens) meets twice a year to reflect on the past few months of services and events; to plan for the future and avoid clashes of events; and to discuss matters pertaining to the Benefice.  
<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/benefice/committee/>

Our children's work in the Benefice continues apace, with the regular JAM Club (Jesus and Me) meeting monthly and linking in with the church service for the day, in addition to a Hot Cross Bun Club during the mornings of Holy Week (attracting 50 children). The children receive a regular monthly Jam Club Newsletter through the post or via email with news, jokes, and competitions for the children to interact with and engage in various activities. The Jam Club News is also posted on the Benefice web site.



<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/jamclub/>

The Benefice web site continues to grow under the expert leadership of Paul Bevan, with many people visiting it and local people using it to find information about services, newsletters, JAM Club competitions, etc. Good and effective communication is important in a large rural Benefice such as Bansfield. In 2006 over 65,000 webpages were viewed on the website by visitors worldwide.

We are greatly encouraged with the way the Benefice has made the commitment to work together as one Benefice and yet still retain the commitment to the individual parishes and the restoration and preservation of their lovely ancient buildings. We are securing our own foundations and preparing to move onward and outward discovering new ways of being church, using our buildings more efficiently and effectively, and reaching out into the Benefice communities, raising the Church's profile and thus proclaiming the Gospel message.

## The Benefice Churches in Detail

The churches of the benefice are all splendid in their own right with two of them, Cowlinge and Denston having entries in Simon Jenkin's book "England's thousand best churches".

### **St Margaret of Antioch, Cowlinge – contact: Mrs Jean Davison 01440 820274**

A church recorded in the Domesday book with 50 acres of land. Situated on the edge of a scattered village, with pleasant churchyard. Massive brick tower of 1733, built to replace a former collapse, by Francis Dickins who has an impressive monument in the chancel. The remainder of the Church is 14th Century. Mainly septaria and brick with a variety of dressed stone incorporated. Interior – north and south aisles with a parclose screen, in south with crude carving. Nave and Chancel with crown post roof which gives a lofty impression. Clerestory to Nave, Rood Screen with original gates. Usual signs of blocked former entrance to Rood Loft. Medieval wall painting above chancel arch depicting St Michael and the Blessed Virgin. Large black marble Altar which was restored after resting in another part of the Church. A Gallery to the West same period as the Tower, with more tributes to Francis Dickins. At the foot of the tower the requirements of a team of bell ringers, the bells being still rung. Outside the chancel is shored with heavy brick buttresses, and under the east window a grilled opening thought to ventilate a Charnel Chamber. Churchyards were re-used in the Middle Ages, and the bones were removed to Charnels.



<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/cowlinge/history/>

**St Nicholas, Denston – contact: Mrs Rosemary Macaire 01440 820432**

Doomsday Book did not record a church in Denston. However a church (or chapel) existed in the 12th Century on the site of the present church, which apart from the tower was extensively enlarged and rebuilt in the 15th Century, because of the founding of a “college” under the terms of the will of John Denston. Three chantry priests, one master and two co-brethren were incorporated with the parish church and ministered to the parishioners. The result was one of the finest small parish churches in Suffolk, virtually unaltered since those days, though 30 years ago it was in danger of falling into terminal disrepair, after a lot of hard work and



a very successful restoration programme, the church is now well worth a visit. The tower now looks rather overwhelmed by the rest of the church which is magnificent, with north and south aisles matching the length of the nave and the chancel. There is much medieval carving such as animals on the border just below the massive timber roof. A great feature is the Seven Sacrament Font, one of 36 in East Anglia but only 2 elsewhere in England. There are numerous monuments, hatchments, and Royal Coats of Arms. The ancient stalls for the chantry priests still remain in the chancel and there are a number of old floor brasses depicting members of local families. The exterior is equally impressive, with a vaulted porch, a stoup at the entrance, three scratch dials discernable in the south wall buttress. A number of stained glass windows, some however modern. The church stands in a commanding position on Top Green, flanked by two ancient houses, Church House and Chantry Farm. Denston church is now in an excellent state of repair due to major maintenance / restoration works in the 1980s. The Parish is small yet the congregation enthusiastic in the maintenance of the Church building, which is of great historical value, numbering among the top churches of England.

<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/denston/history/>

**St Mary, Lidgate – contact: Mrs Janet Mitson 01638 500587**

Built on a commanding site of a former castle, it actually stands in one of the three baileys. Not recorded in Domesday. The tower is 13th – 14th century with a plain parapet. The porch is reckoned to be 17th century, but there are signs of an earlier one. The south door is partly Norman but with later shafts, rather unusual. Nave has tall 14th century arcades but no clerestory. The tower arch is surprisingly low fitted with a medieval door. The font is very plain with some scribbled graffiti. Nave and chancel roofs are plain, solid timber; medieval benches are again plain for their period.



There is a rood stair with an open doorway at the top. Nice rood screen with gates. Two lovely carved parclose screens in the aisles. 17th century pulpit, possibly part of former three decker. In the chancel two piscinas and two ambries. Some modern stained glass windows. Much medieval graffiti scattered round the church including some music! Organ near side door. Church very well kept. Lidgate church continues to raise funds through the renting out of a marquee which the church has owned and run as a private company for

the last seven years. Local people help erect and take down the marquee in order to help raise funds for the church. The church enjoys great and active support from the village especially with fund raising and social events. The church was also in the national press with its innovative work having solar panels installed on the tower roof to generate electricity.

<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/lidgate/history/>

### **St Peter, Ousden – contact: Mrs Lavinia Robinson 01638 500040**

Domesday records a Church with 30 acres of land. Pleasantly situated on the western edge of an attractive village it is a complete contrast to the other churches of the Benefice. First, it has a central tower, one of only a few in Suffolk. Secondly, the Nave was extended in the 19th century which makes the tower more correctly described as off-centre. With the heavy Norman tower arches separating the Nave and the Chancel the interior of the church has a “compartmental” look. The Chancel is mainly 19th century restoration. A somewhat plain 18/19th century pulpit. Tower recess lofty, also Nave, restored in 19th century. The brick built Moseley Memorial Chapel 18/19th century has a decorated timber roof. It is used as the vestry, has memorial tablets to three parishioners and the Ireland and Praed family. An impressive font in excellent condition, with a modern wooden cover. Royal Coats of Arms on Nave walls. Unusual Norman window in Tower recess. Blocked south door with Roman tile tympanum. the north porch is more modern flintwork but an ancient doorway into the church has shafts of different period. Large memorial to Letitia Mosley 1619. Main structure of the church the usual flint, stone, septaria and some brickwork of the 19/20th century. The five bells are still rung though there is no team in the village. Interesting gravestones in the closed churchyard, St Barnabas burial ground up in the village. When it became clear that a major repair of the Norman Tower was necessary, the Friends of St Peter's was formed to raise the necessary funds. No help was available from English Heritage / Lottery funding on the grounds that the tower was not yet in danger of falling down. However, with the aid of fundraising events within the parish, including a jazz concert by the lake just beyond the church, and grants from such bodies as the Historic Churches and various relevant Trusts, £90,000 was raised, the tower restored, Moseley monument repaired and pew heaters installed. The building now appears in good condition. The village of Ousden also has a small chapel located further into the village – St Barnabas chapel which is used for some services.



<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/ousden/history/>

**All Saints' Church, Stansfield – contact: Mr Chris Trehella 01284 789217**

A church recorded in Domesday Book, with 15 acres of free land. A commanding position on a hill in the north of the village. Impressive tower with chequered flintwork at the base. Usual Suffolk church construction of stone, flint, some dressed stone (possibly from original church), even some brickwork (probably Victorian) on north wall of chancel. Two large image niches in east end wall, scratch dial on south wall. Inside gives the impression of being somewhat smaller, there being no aisles to the nave. Massive timber vaulted roof to the nave, very dark. Chancel roof much later. Usual signs of removal of rood loft and screen though lower portion of screen has been restored. Stained glass - one full window in chancel to memory of Rev Phipps (19th Century) He is portrayed as St Peter! Random fragments collected in nearby window. Impressive floor tiles in chancel and other places. Stansfield has a small but faithful congregation, who manage to organise events to keep the church in good repair and pay the Benefice Share.



<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/stansfield/history/>

**St Margaret of Antioch, Stradishall – contact: Mr Robert Clinton 01440 820734**

A small Church, set in a leafy churchyard, easily passed by unseen, though in the centre of the village. Church records go back to 1548. Recorded in doomsday, at least a church was with 30 acres of land. The tower dates from about 1300 with later brick battlements. The south porch is very attractive, with an openwork timber frame, standing on a high brick base and part of the original 14<sup>th</sup> Century timber entrance arch survives. Inside – Nave with north and south aisle with clerestory windows. Chancel with massive stone altar. The east window is filled with



obscured glass, 19th century. Various fragments of wall paintings scattered round the church, one to the right of the north door is thought to be of St Christopher, and remains of a text between the north clerestory windows. A beautifully sculptured font, very small. Heavily timbered almost flat Nave roof. Ancient stalls. A very small, comparatively modern piped organ, acquired in the 1950/60's. West window quite modern, a tribute to the RAF station 1938-70 with station and RAF insignia. Stuart coat of arms over tower arch (James 1) various tablets recording prominent families of the village past. There is a ring of five bells which are rung regularly. Stradishall has historically been the least supported of the seven parishes. We are now seeing a revival of interest at the Church. There are now two wardens and more people coming to the church to worship. Social events have been organised, Harvest suppers in the church, Christmas Bazaar in church and plans are being made for restoration work and thoughts on how the building might be more used and developed as a community resource for the village (as the Village Hall is due to close and be demolished).

<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/stradishall/history/>

## All Saints', Wickhambrook – contact: Mr Mike Chester 01440 821120

Believed to have started with a small Saxon church on an old possibly Pagan site. There are some Saxon remains. Usual chancel, Nave with north and south clerestoried aisles, and western tower. Built of flint, pebble and re-used dressed stone. The north aisle believed to be the site of the first small church. Dedication to All Saints recorded as 1311, Vicars back to 1299. Over the centuries the church has been dramatically altered and rebuilt, and shows how Wickhambrook was in the forefront of the rebellion against the Established Church. Some prominent Non-



Conformists have tablets in the church but the most striking memorial is that of Sir Thomas Higham in the chancel. He was a famous warrior in Elizabethan times and retired to Giffords Hall. The fine chancel is on one level and the nave has a Jacobean hammer-beam roof, one of only two in Suffolk. The chancel and tower areas are fine and lofty and the north and south aisles have prominent arcades. The 14th century Porch has a huge stoup and a 13th century door. There is a modern Baptistry with an ancient Norman unfinished font. A feature of the church is the number of floor or ledger stones to prominent people over the centuries. Rood stairs still preserved with strangely two doorways at the top. Wickhambrook has now completed three phases of restoration work and had a very satisfactory Quinquennial report in 2005. Large grants were secured from English Heritage and were matched by a very active Appeals/fundraising committee who have organised many events for the local community to support its church. In all over £350,000 worth of restoration work was accomplished. The Benefice Hall is next to Wickhambrook church, restored by Benefice generosity in 2002/3 and now an attractive venue for meetings, also used by the local parish council for meetings.

<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/wickhambrook/history/>

## The Benefice Hall

The Bansfield Benefice Hall is the hall available for all the churches of the Benefice to use for events and meetings. It is in the churchyard of All Saints' Church Wickhambrook. The hall itself was refurbished, redecorated and the floor resealed in 2003 by virtue of very kind donation of materials and workmanship by members of the parishes of the Bansfield benefice. Prior to this building being the Benefice Hall and All Saints' church Hall, it was used as the school room. This role was supplanted when Wickhambrook Primary School opened in 1878. <http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/benefice/hall.html>  
The hall is used for the

- Sunday school (Jesus and Me - JAM club)  
<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/jamclub/>
- Monday evening study group  
<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/benefice/study/>
- Hot cross bun club - during Holy Week  
<http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/jamclub/hcbclub.html>
- Deanery synod meetings
- Benefice and fund raising events
- After service refreshments

## Services

Before the interregnum the usual service rotas were of the following form.

### SERVICE ROTA May 2007

May 2007	St. Nicholas DENSTON	All Saints STANSFIELD	St. Margaret STRADISHALL	All Saints WICKHAMBROOK	St. Margaret COWLENGE	St. Mary LIDGATE	St. Peter OUSDEN
Tuesday 1 <sup>st</sup>						10.00am HC	
Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup>		10.00am HC					
Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> EASTER 5	10.30am Matins BCP Fiona Evans	9.30am Matins BCP John Dennis		9.30am HC CW Jam Club IMF		9.30am HC CW Bob Torrens	11.00am HC BCP IMF
Tuesday 8 <sup>th</sup>	10.00am HC						
Thursday 10 <sup>th</sup>					10.00am HC		
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> EASTER 6	10.00am Benefice HC BCP IMF						
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup>			10.00am HC				
Thursday 17 <sup>th</sup>							10.00am HC
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> EASTER 7	9.30am HC BCP IMF	8.00am HC CW IMF	3.00pm Evensong BCP IMF	9.30pm Family Paul Bevan	11.00am HC CW IMF	9.30am Morning Prayer CW Ann Jones	11.00am HC ext CW Philip Dravcott
Tuesday 22 <sup>nd</sup>						10.00am HC	
Thursday 24 <sup>th</sup>		10.00am HC					
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> PENTECOST				10.00am Benefice HC CW IMF			
Tuesday 29 <sup>th</sup>							
Thursday 31 <sup>st</sup>							

HC = Holy Communion CW = Common Worship Service Book BCP = Book of Common Prayer SOP = Songs of Praise IMF = Rev. Ian M. Finn (Vicar)

For a full listing please see <http://www.sanger.ac.uk/Users/ab6/bansfield/services/>. We would like to retain a pattern similar to this. We use a mix of traditional and current services, BCP and CW. Hymns are usually from A&M as well as Mission Praise. Most music is provided by the organ but we do have some element of guitar accompaniment when requested. There are currently five organists who play in the benefice.

## Congregations

As a flavour of attendance the following represents attendance at key and ordinary times in 2006.

Services	Easter	Harvest	Christmas	Benefice	Parish
Cowlinge	26	115	30	25-35	7-12
Denston	33	36	50	25-35	7-12
Lidgate	60	35	66	30-40	8-15
Ousden	43	34	105	25-35	7-12
Stansfield	14	40	120	25-35	7-12
Stradishall	55	55	55	25-35	7-12
Wickhambrook	38	30	68	35-45	15-25

Benefice Occasional offices (2006) – Baptisms 8; Weddings 4; Funerals 12.

## New Incumbent

### We are seeking a new incumbent to work with us ...

- Someone who is prepared to be involved in the local communities with 'a ministry of visibility' ie attending events, talking to people, being 'seen'. Approachable, friendly, sociable, reflecting the Gospel in word and deed, with a smile and friendly word to all
- Working with young people and families with the link to Wickhambrook school being especially important
- A person of prayerful and theologically reflective ministry. Someone for whom Word and Sacrament are central to their spiritual life
- Management and delegation skills, communication, stamina, vision of working as one Benefice with seven individual parishes. Balancing the needs and identities of individual parishes with the totality of the Benefice
- Education and teaching the faith - Monday study group, baptism preparation, marriage preparation, confirmation (increases of numbers in last few years through Jam Club and school contacts)
- Willing to address the issues of today - someone for whom leading worship and preaching is important
- Ecumenical work - important to be involved
- A spiritual leader, a person of vision and enthusiasm for the faith, a pastor and shepherd of the flock of Christ in this part of God's Kingdom.

### What the benefice has to offer and its strengths

- It is set in a charming rural environment with excellent quality of life
- Good house in rural location, full expenses of office paid
- Share always paid in full
- Parishes which will be responsive to spiritual and prayerful leadership
- A variety of ministries and experiences with skilled and experienced Ministry Team
- All the required benefice infrastructure is already in place and works well
- Committed and capable lay people, willing and able to take on responsibility
- Supportive churches, open to new ideas, and a vision for the growth of the Benefice
- Social events to rival many larger Benefices!
- Opportunities to develop interests in education, young people's work, work in the wider church (ie Deanery and Diocese)

### Challenges

- To balance the needs of seven rural parishes; building ties while maintaining distinctiveness.
- To be an effective manager of time, people and commitments
- To help our churches to grow to meet the future needs of all seven parishes
- To work ecumenically and develop contacts across the communities including contacts with schools and interest groups in the seven villages

## Contact Details

For any questions concerning the parishes please refer to the Rural Dean -  
Rev. Ian M. Finn 01440 708768 [ian.finn1@btinternet.com](mailto:ian.finn1@btinternet.com)  
(Rev Finn was also the latest incumbent before Interregnum)

## Applications

The Venerable David Brierley  
Archdeacon of Sudbury  
Sudbury Lodge  
Stanningfield Road  
Great Whelnetham  
Bury St Edmunds  
IP30 0TL  
Tel: 01284 386942  
Email: [archdeacon.david@stedmundsbury.anglican.org](mailto:archdeacon.david@stedmundsbury.anglican.org)