



The Parish of The Upper Wreake Annual Report for 2024

The Parish of The Upper Wreake Parish consists of the churches of :-

BROOKSBY St. Michael & All Angels; **FRISBY on the WREAKE** St. Thomas of Canterbury;
HOBY, All Saints; **KIRBY BELLARS** St. Peter; **RAGDALE** All Saints; **ROTHERBY** All Saints.

Introduction:

This annual report has been produced in order to comply with the requirements of the Charities Act 1993, and the Church Accounts Regulations 1997. The intention is to provide a fuller picture of the life of the Church during the year than could be obtained from the accounts alone.

Objectives of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) and District Church Councils (DCC):

The PCC of the Parish meets at least four times a year to deal with any matters which concern the mission, development and administration of the Church, and is responsible for auditing decisions of the DCCs.

The DCCs function with delegated authority from the PCC in the care of the church buildings (held jointly by the local Churchwardens and the Incumbent), finance and the local mission of the Church.

Electoral Roll (as at Easter 2024)

	Brooksby	Frisby	Hoby	Kirby	Ragdale	Rotherby	Total
2024	6	23	39	15	10	15	108
2023	6	21	40	17	11	15	110

PCC Members

Chair:	The Revd David Harknett
Vice-Chair:	Canon Malcolm Britton
Secretary:	<i>vacant</i>
Treasurer:	<i>vacant</i>
<i>Elected Members:</i>	
Frisby-on-the- Wreake:	Pru Smith (CW), Simon Blake (CW)
Hoby:	Vic Allsop (CW), Nicola Wheeler (CW), June Allsop
Kirby Bellars:	Alan McPherson (<i>DCC link</i>)
Ragdale:	Jane Burgess (CW)
Rotherby:	Sue Smith (CW), Lesley Potter (CW),
Brooksby:	<i>vacant</i>
<i>Co-opted Members:</i>	<i>none</i>

CW = Churchwarden

**That surely is one of the most extraordinary mysteries of being Christian.
We are in the middle of two things that seem quite contradictory:
in the middle of the heart of God, the ecstatic joy of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit;
and in the middle of a world of threat, suffering, sin and pain.**

(Rowan Williams, 'Being Christian')

"Quite contradictory". Perhaps that is why the universal symbol of a Christ-follower is the cross. God reconciling to himself *"all things"*, whether things on earth or things in heaven; *"by making peace through his blood shed on the cross"*. A joyful place to stand. A painful place to stand. And a stark reminder that, as peace-makers, people of peace, we walk in the way of Jesus as his body the Church. In March 2021, meeting with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in Najaf, Iraq (a nation devastated by years of conflict), Pope Francis' stated; *"Peace does not demand winners or losers, but brothers and sisters who, despite misunderstandings and past wounds, choose the path of dialogue."*

I do not find our Minster Communities (MCs) journey within the church has been 'peace-full', even though MCs *"champion local parish worship & witness as well as sacramental ministry."* A Christian presence in every community will not have its own stipendiary vicar, so where is God taking us? How should we, together, tackle the challenges of living out our 'everyday faith' in the 21st Century? To ensure that we are a church, as Pope Francis pleaded, that is; *"bruised, hurting & dirty because it's been out on the streets, rather than unhealthy from being confined & clinging to its own security"*.

FAITH

Reports below testify to a ministry motivated by faith in Christ Jesus – why else would we do what we do?! Everything we do expresses the good news of a risen Lord – inside or outside, to individuals, small groups or large gatherings. The charism of love, joy & peace in this parish remains attractive to many and this is fed-back often by visitors, especially through Life Events.

Of particular note are the midweek New Life Group meeting in Rotherby and the Faith in Nature project that acts as a Hoby DNA. There is hunger to engage with both the written Word and our living planet, and we will nurture these two foci through 2025. Alongside deeper (re-)engagement with Brooksby College as the merger with Loughborough College invites fresh conversations. It is vital that our emphasis, together, is in growing in our own faith and helping others to do the same.

FOLK

We bid farewell to a number of individuals who have influenced parish life over many decades through death, and through retirement, such as Jane in Ragdale. A dedicated few make a huge impact proportionately, so it is good to see a growth in Hoby DCC; a strengthening of Kirby DCC/ Roof Resurrectors; a nurturing of a Church Supporters' Group in Frisby. Others are connected in looser ways, and we continue to represent our communities well, apart from younger generations.

Our rural church life remains fragile, and one example is two consecutive mid-morning Services in Rotherby where no Churchwardens were available. I have learned that I am not able to prepare & lead an act of worship and be responsible for the building & practicalities. God reveals himself in new ways through such adversity, often in laughter, but it is not sustainable and raises the questions

– what do we want & need to feed us... who are we & what we can manage? At the heart of MCs are “named local ministers”, which may be the existing Churchwardens in each village – but again, what capacity is there to keep doing what we are doing... and how do we discuss such challenges?

FABRIC

Brooksby St. Michael & All Angels consistently ‘Wows’, thanks to the incredible efforts of Malcolm & Jeanne over the past decade. In contrast, Kirby St. Peter’s has been without a permanent roof the whole of my 8 years here – and yet, the ‘Friends of’ has never been stronger nor clearer. Time, energy, love & money are being poured into the fabric of each village church, mostly in tandem with the local community, but obviously thanks to one or two dedicated individuals.

On a zoom call about the rural church, a priest in Wales said how vital it has been that their newly formed ‘Mission / Ministry Area’ (of three years) looks at everything through the lens of ‘mission’. Their vision nationally is for their Mission Areas; *“to be the prayerful heart of their community, sharing the Christian message in a way that engages, inspires and transforms”*. I’d like to see such clarity in our conversations about our buildings, as I think it is what we do implicitly. This definition (“prayerful heart”) or one similar, might keep us attentive to being one parish with six diverse expressions, ensuring that our historic fabric serves our living faith.

FINANCES

Once again funds have been raised and finances stewarded in order to see through new projects, as well as maintain traditional expenditure. Many monies are focussed on the fabric, which itself can communicate the good news of Jesus to a hurting world. Other monies are shared generously with charities doing work we cannot do alone. Some monies are directed to mission opportunities, nurturing relationships and sharing faith-stories. However, our Mission & Ministry Fund is not used as originally intended, with the emphasis on creating & funding outreach activity that speaks more directly of Christ’s love. I wonder how we can breathe new life into this excellent resource?

Another aspect of shared-finance that does not function as intended is the collating of year-end Accounts toward our Annual Parochial Church Meeting. Five years ago I relieved Vic of this task in connection with Corporation Tax returns, in the process securing an £800 rebate of penalty payments over 3 years. I do not see it as a wise use of your priest’s time, consuming 8-12 hours each Spring, so it is another prompt for discerning conversations about necessity (tasks) and capacity (people).

I find continued joy & reward in my ministry among you, hopeful that MC deliberations by the Writing Group will begin to open up fresh insights into ‘future church’. Recently, I have secured a Parish Safeguarding Coordinator for the Upper Wreake following a conversation that began 6 months ago. Before that I had spent most of a year (single-handedly) in conversation with a potential PCC Secretary, only for them to withdraw their offer. And, as mentioned, a lack of PCC Treasurer or equivalent, creates additional work for me. Administrative responsibility for the Parish (PCC Meetings, PCC Finances, Safeguarding) cannot lie with me as priest, if you want me to fulfil my ordination vows, *“to lead God’s people in the offering of praise and the proclamation of the gospel/ to sustain the community of the faithful by the ministry of word and sacrament, that we all may grow into the fullness of Christ and be a living sacrifice acceptable to God”*.

In a world of threat, suffering, sin & pain, may we help one another to know the ecstatic joy of Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Amen.

Much of what has happened in SWF this year, it could be said, has been dominated by the Minster Community Process and a second go at trying to get the geographical areas determined. But on reflection I think the use of the word 'dominated' is the wrong word. It has been more of an irritation and taken up much more of our time than it should have done. What has dominated our church lives in 2024 has been business as usual. I have seen either in person or heard from those involved that the life of the church goes on, much as it always has done, and despite what is happening elsewhere, either in the Diocese, or perhaps at a national level.

Perhaps the most significant event for us in SWF in 2024, didn't happen in our group of villages at all. It was the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. The detail of the Makin Report, which unless you have a strong constitution, I would not recommend you read, meant that it was impossible for him to continue in post. Safeguarding is such an important part of the life of the church, and I am sure that in 2025 it will be passed from the Church of England to an independent body, which I believe will be a good thing. That resignation does impact on us locally, as many identify the church as all of us. Of course, we are far more complex than that but when an Archbishop resigns that does have consequences for us all.

The prayer produced for Safeguarding Sunday in the middle of November and at the time of the Archbishop's resignation goes as follows: Dear God, help us to be a church that: Loves, welcomes, protects. Listens, learns, serves. Repents, restores, transforms. Values, cares, believes. God of justice and compassion, hear our prayer. Helps us, heal us, guide us, we pray. In Jesus name. Amen.

What I find though in our daily routines of being church is that we continue our work. There are so many hard working and dedicated members on our PCC's and DCC's and on our Group Council, and without all of you each parish church in SWF would find it impossible to continue. You are the guardians of our ongoing witness to a risen Christ, and you should all be proud of the work that you do and carry out in SWF in his name.

All our services have taken place in 2024, even when illness of clergy has affected us. We have seen all our major festivals marked and continued to maintain the levels of attendance at our services, and in some cases improved on 2023. We thank all of our clergy and lay leaders for their continued hard work, Revd Jane, Revd David, Revd Crystal and Canon Malcolm along with retired clergy whose contribution has almost certainly 'kept us afloat'. Thank you to you all.

Conversations about the future of our parish churches has been at the forefront of some of the considerations of our PCC's, DCC's and their communities. Consultations have met with a positive response and such conversations are set to continue in 2025. Our parish churches are in some cases struggling and are financially insecure, but discovering good will from their communities gives them and all of us hope for the life of the church in our rural setting. We continue to pray that our parish churches will be seen as adding value to their communities and that those from a more secular background continue to grow in their appreciation of our historic Christian heritage. There is every

sign that this connection still exists and can benefit the parish church and its heritage in its service to all who live in these villages of ours.

The office continues to be based at Twyford, with thanks to Twyford PCC for their hospitality. I work for the most from home, but most weeks I am at the office on a Friday to complete any photocopying and to get supplies for the parish churches. I have had people say that it can be difficult to get hold of the office. The best way is to email me on clusteradmin@btinternet.com which I look at regularly and always on a Tuesday and a Friday.

This year we saw the loss of some long serving members of our PCC's both past and present. I pay tribute on behalf of us all to the service and dedication of Joy Atton to Little Dalby Parish Church, to Noel Carding for his service to Ashby Folville Parish Church, to Pam Adams for her service also to Ashby Folville Parish Church, to Eric Cobley for his service to Burrough on the Hill Parish Church, to Bill Johnson for his service to Great Dalby Parish Church, to Leslie Case for her service to Hoby Parish Church and to Roger Sharpe along time colleague and friend to me when I was working at Great Dalby Methodist Church and also for his many years of service to that church. May they rest in Peace, and Rise in Glory

A very happy occasion in April was the celebration for Julie Bell of 50 years as church organist at Pickwell, and other local churches and also to note her retirement. We had a packed church and an opportunity to mark this remarkable achievement. It showed SWF at it's very best.

I return to where we started, and that's with Minster Communities. The voting for the October proposal before us was decisive in SWF. 2 churches voted green to proceed, 4 amber, with some doubts and questions and 10 voted no, and submitted many questions and concerns as well. Elsewhere in our proposed area the majority voted red or amber. The Diocesan Minster Community Team are now looking to arrange for conversations to take place in early 2025 to discuss what this means for us all. They will be coming to the SWF Group Council in January 2025, so the Minster Community conversation will certainly be with us into 2025 and no doubt take up, perhaps much of our time next year. I hope we get a good turn out for that meeting so that we can all listen well to each other and consider fully what we are saying to each other, before anything is decided.

I close with the reassurance of the Lords Prayer in its traditional words.

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, In earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

3.0 School

Rev'd David

Winter Term : Frisby School thrives under its new identity as one of the Rise MAT family of schools. (*This is a Leicester Diocese Multi-Academy Trust*). I continued to serve as Governor through the year, with Janet Norburn serving for part of the school year. A third Foundation Governor was appointed a few years ago, from Frisby village, but Stuart Thwaites resigned in 2024.

I led Collective Worship on a regular basis, along with half-termly school Services in Frisby Church. Thanks to Pru & Simon for their dedication to this link with staff & pupils & their joy in it, which includes serving Refreshments to one Class plus parents after each church service.

Spring/Summer Term : St.Thomas hosted the Year 6 pupils “moving-up” transition, as school life ended with joy, tears & prayers. Pupils very much feel that the building is ‘theirs’ and we feel privileged to help them reflect on their life’s journey at key points during their school years here.

Autumn Term : James Plumb was appointed full-time teacher, having been part-time at Frisby & part-time at Rearsby previous to that.

I continue to participate in the “National Younger Leadership Groups” (from the Archbishop of York), and these nation-wide, interactive Zoom calls take place five times/ year. Still an exciting opportunity for young people to; “develop in pupil leadership, grow in faith and have their voices heard on key topics and issues that are important to them and their communities”. A delight to welcome Pru as a local-church contributor in September, and all PCC members were invited to come once - both to give and receive.

Individual priestly contact with the Head and school is easy, but it remains difficult to nurture school-church contact across the parish. The geography of the school being in just 1 of the 6 villages and the bisecting railway line, as well as the busy-ness of CWs and congregants captures some of the challenge. At the same time, the Church of England’s vision and strategy, led by Archbishop Stephen Cottrell, has a focus on ‘growing younger’, which makes consultation and engagement with children and young people integral to the work of the church. How can we build on the long-term, warm relationships that we enjoy with Frisby Primary, for mutual benefit & growth? Thank you to Pru for taking the initiative with contact, communication & ideas as a parish-school ‘Link’.

4.0 Rotherby House Group

Lesley Potter & Sue Smith

A small mid week group, we meet to share the stories of Jesus, read Gods word and pray for the world and the surrounding villages.

Another exiting, fun packed year meeting on Wednesday afternoons, this year we have finished another book by Dave Tomlinson’ The Bad Christian Manifesto’ and actually met Dave himself at a talk in Oakham, his books are really thought provoking and lead to really deep conversations. We also looked at a book by Barbara Brown Taylor called ‘An Alter in the World’ another good read, showing how we can find God in the every day, here and now, that we don’t have to travel the world looking to experience Jesus he is right here, if only we take the time to live in the moment.

We have also shown our drama skills at the 10-30 service’s at Rotherby, firstly at our Carol Service and then the Harvest Festival Service where David Parr wrote a script about Adam and Eve this must be seen to be believed Lesley and Denis are expecting their Oscars at any time. More to follow on

this, watch this space.

Sadly this year our eldest member Lesley Case passed away Lesley was in her mid 90's but still managed to come to our meetings right up to almost three weeks before she died, still driving her car although we often had to park it for her, she always had a lot to give to the group and often hosted at her home always with cake or ice cream.

We are a small group and always ready to encourage new members new comers are always made welcome, we have shared several meals together again this year, usually with a quiz that David Parr has prepared and charades which has us in fits of laughter.

We carried on meeting through the summer when we could, during Lent we join in with the Lent course and again at Advent joining with other members of the Upper Wreake.

We are all looking forward to another year together who knows what this year will bring, if you like the sound of our group please come and give us a go you'd be made very welcome.

5.0 Little Butterflies *(Carers and Toddlers' Group)*

Janet Norburn & Jan Pascoe

5.1 Methodist Local Lay Pastor *Janet Norburn*

- ~ The Hot Potato Group
- ~ The Tea and Cakes Group
- ~ DVD Ministry
- ~ Circuit Superintendent

6.0 Safeguarding *Rev'd David*

2024 was full-year without a Parish Safeguarding Coordinator, (PSC), the weight of responsibility lying with me as Incumbent. This leaves the priest incredibly exposed, while undermining good governance & good practice in the Parish. With no assistance from the PCC, I initiated and pursued a conversation with an able worshipper from a neighbouring parish, and that process will come to fruition around the time of our APCM in 2025. This will result in a PSC for Upper Wreake who is not just competent & confident, but committed to the cultural change which underlies effective SG.

One annual review of a Safeguarding Agreement takes place each Spring, overseen by Rachael Spiers (Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator).

A reminder that safeguarding means "Creating Safe Places. Together" and so safeguarding is EVERYONES responsibility.

General

The church operated without churchwardens for the second year. Due diligence is being carried out by the SMB College Group for a merger with Loughborough College from the start of the 2025/26 academic year which may have implications for the church in the future, particularly with regard to weddings in partnership with Brooksby Hall.

Mission, Worship and Events

During the year we had two 10.30am Holy Communion Services, 2 memorial service and 8 weddings, slightly more than the previous year. fewer than in previous years.

The freemasons held their usual service on Palm Sunday and on Good Friday a foot of the cross meditative service was held. The lambing service at Hall Farm was again well supported. The Remembrance Sunday service is a regular feature. Christmas was celebrated with the Ratcliffe Chorale concert and the QHSA carol service. It was also good to meet the request from the land-based department of the college to hold a carol service with 83 students and members of staff

The church was open as usual for Ride and Stride in September and again we were represented at the Brooksby Hall Wedding Fairs.

Fabric and related topics

There were no building projects or repairs needed during the year. The quinquennial inspection was carried out by Peter Rogan in November and we await his report. The electrical circuit was checked and certified although the large 3-phase heater failed the test and is no longer used. The lightning conductor was also tested. The safety of the gravestones was checked, the fire extinguishers serviced and the carpet professionally cleaned

Derek Overfield continued to mow and maintain the churchyard and Candice and Garry Barker have overseen the various bird nest boxes.

Fund-raising

Fund-raising included a quiz at Asfordby Stute and income from Easy Fund Raising. The Stute has now closed which may have implications for future fund-raising.

Thanks are due to Revd David Harknett, other clergy who have conducted weddings, vergers from other villages who have rallied round, and John Norburn our very accommodating organist and sound man and occasional recorder of lambing services. We are also indebted to Jason Spencer and James Fryer of the SMB College group for their advice and practical help and their Hotel Services colleagues. A special word of thanks for Vic Allsop, our administrator and Jeanne Knowles and Alan Odom who continue to advise support Brooksby Church in many ways.

Mission

We had a record number of school services in 2024 in Feb , March , July , Oct and Dec, a total of 5. The school Harvest service housed 195 children & adults and similarly the Christmas service 181 children & adults.

However the biggest record breaker for numbers was at Charles Sercombe's funeral in Sept when we had approx. 250 housed within the church and approx. 145 outside with a loud speaker relay system to those listening outside : a total of 395.

Although there were no weddings we had 2 baptisms in May and June. In May there were 3 Baptisms in one service : 1 babe , 1 child and 1 adult from the Swann family. Another record which we can challenge other churches in the Upper Wreake to break !

Finally we had our first ordinary carol service constructed along the lines of the 9 Lessons and Carols on 16th December . This was in addition to the usual Christingle service on 24th Dec .

This was brought about by our new Church support Group (CSG). In June we organised a wine and cheese evening to appeal to the village for more help running the church and to try to sort out some sort of succession to the 2 Churchwardens who have been working almost entirely alone keeping the church going for at least the last 12 years.

It was very successful and a group of 9 people came forward to offer their help. Richard Power has been chairing the group who meet every 2 mths and apart from the Carol service mentioned above an amazing cleaning group was formed by Gayna Johnson, a Christmas Tree festival organised by 3 people in the group and Christmas shoe boxes for deprived children . Richard is helping Simon with paperwork and in particular his carrying out of Quinquennial projects , getting grants and obtaining faculties. All of this great work also meant that a significant amount of cash was raised for the church over the Christmas period : nearly £1000 (which does include donations and a VAT claim).

Coffee , Cob and Conversation (CoCoCo) for men in the Upper Wreake is still a regular feature on the 1st Saturday of each month at the Methodist Chapel in Frisby and the PCC has just approved its application to the Mission and Ministry fund to cover the rent of £12 per mth . Those who attend have also agreed to "pay their way" which will cover the costs of the food. We have 6 regulars but there were 7 at the last get together on Sat 1st Feb.

Pru continues to run and help out at the Methodists' teas once a month and Simon attends the Methodist Hot Potato sessions , also once a month, organised by Dennis Hurst.

Most importantly a Zoom meeting just before Christmas with David, the Frisby Churchwardens and Nina (Methodist Circuit Leader for Melton) re-established a working relationship with our Methodist friends which has resulted in our being able to have services together on Sundays once more on the 3rd Sunday of each month.

Minster Communities (MC) : earlier in the year we (DCCs) voted on whether we could go forward to form a Minster Community which is South of Melton (but does not include Melton) and includes East Goscote, Syston, Queniborough and surrounding villages. Frisby DCC overall voted amber (3 amber and 1 red vote) which means the DCC is in favour of going forward with the formation of this new MC but has a number of questions which it would like answered before the formation takes place. This

vote was taken to the PCC in Oct and the results forwarded to the Diocese. 2025 will very likely see the Upper Wreake merge with an MC of 23 parishes and a total income of approx. £120k meaning that it will only be able to afford 1.85 stipended clergy and must think seriously about the recruitment of non-stipendiary priests to “cover” all these parishes.

Main projects/maintenance .

The Old Wall has been estimated by Melton Borough Council to cost approx. £52k (quote Summers Inman). It's located at the west end of the church in a burial ground which has been closed for many years. Owing to its proximity to graves only digging by hand is permitted without any use of diggers. Stone Masons and Archaeologists will have to be employed making this an expensive project which will no doubt boost the Council Tax of each house in Frisby. Unfortunately this wall has been in a very poor condition now for approx. 2 years and has very unsightly orange fencing around the affected area .

Leadworks have done 2 lots of work on the Main Aisle roof to try to solve the leaks inside the church. They didn't manage to do so on their 1st visit but on their 2nd visit did some much more extensive work on the west end of the main aisle roof which , we think, has done the job.

The winding mechanism on the clock needed renewing and this was carried out by Time Assured in Oct/Nov of 2024 .

These 2 small projects were financed from our savings acct and total costs were just over £3k.

Plans for the future :

We have lost approx. 5-6 regular givers this year through death or decisions that they no longer wish to support the church . We're down to 39 regular givers in total now and there's a real need to introduce a funding programme this year. The next priority of the DCC is to work out how best we can organise and achieve this. As will be noted from the accounts our expenditure exceeds our income by £2829.93 this year. Our CSG has termed this a “spring offensive” to canvas new homes (with appropriate flyers).

They (CSG) also hope to launch an event to coincide with the Easter Day service on April 20th at Frisby.

Damp is still a problem in the vestry area and our Architect has advised us that this might be ameliorated by the installation of a good drainage system around the NW side of the church. As this could be costly (<£10k) it would be prudent to try to get a grant from the Diocese (which is currently offering minor repair grants) and concurrently obtain a faculty along with Architect's specs and tenders. We should be in a position to submit an application mid 2025 with luck.

Our CSG is organising the Ratcliffe Chorale to come to Frisby church in June of this year and they will very soon be looking at other events to put on in 2025.

9.0 All Saints Hoby

Nicola Wheeler and Vic Allsop (Churchwardens)

In the autumn the Parish Church lost one of its long-term supporters. Leslie Case had been Churchwarden of Hoby Parish Church for a year in the 1950's and continued to maintain an interest in the life of the Parish Church and of the wider Parish of the Upper Wreake. In the spring Bill Roberts died. He had for some years been a member of this Church Council and had served as church treasurer. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

In 2024 the Faith in Nature worship programme continued. These services have given a different focus for our 10.30am worship and have done so throughout the year. In addition, we continued our efforts to obtain our silver eco church award, and pleasingly this was achieved just before the end of the year. We also saw the return of the 8.30am services on the first Sunday of the month, seeing the return of a monthly Holy Communion service. We thank Revd David Harknett, Revd Crystal McAllister and Canon Malcolm Britton for their ongoing support for All Saints'. To those thanks we add the name of Richard Perry who is now our organist at All Saints'. Richard plays regularly at our 10.30am monthly gatherings. It is many years since Hoby had its own village-based organist, and we are pleased he has taken on this role.

The close relationship with the Methodist Church enjoyed for many years was interrupted in 2024. Pleasingly, conversations at the end of the year will see the return of worshipping together (Jan '25)

Members of the District Church Council (DCC). In 2024, sadly, Jo Perry resigned from the DCC. We thank Jo for her work while on the DCC and for her ongoing support as a keen bell ringer. Ian Stonehouse joined the DCC at the Annual 2024 Church Council meeting. Ian joins the other DCC members of June Allsop, Canon Vic Allsop, Sue Croft, Revd David Harknett, Anne Kell, Revd Crystal McAllister, Richard Perry and Nicola Wheeler.

Appointment of a new architect for the Parish Church. In 2024 we needed to appoint a new architect to undertake the quinquennial (five-year inspection of the church) in the autumn, and to undertake with the Church Council the project to provide ambient and disabled access for the church, by replacing the church path and conserving the church gates and pillars.

The process is protracted but by February interviews of the final two candidates was complete and the Church Council was pleased to appoint Simon Bird as Church Architect.

Simon undertook the quinquennial inspection in November, and we received the report just before Christmas. We will respond to its recommendations in 2025.

He also started the process of preparing plans for the disability access for the Church and by December this year we obtained in principal approval from the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) for the plans, which will enable us to proceed with the project in 2025. We look forward to sharing plans with Hoby next year and to get feedback from those who regularly walk through the churchyard. We are fortunate to have (or the promise) of legacy money, and with grant funding hope to make significant progress in 2025.

In March 2024 the DCC noted that the Churchyard Extension was now closed for burials. A letter to that effect has been circulated to the village, advising of the issue before the Church Council. As well as working with the Diocese for a new Churchyard Extension, we continue to actively look to partner with others to achieve our goal. We hope for some positive news in 2025.

Happenings in 2024 – Events, news, fund raising and charity events etc.

- There have been 4 fund raising events. In May it was a talk by Emma, Duchess of Rutland, in June Anne Thomas in concert, with cream teas, In September it was the annual Ride+Stride, and in October Abba tribute singers. Many thanks to all those who helped and worked so hard to make these successful events and raise funds for the upkeep of the church.
- The annual coffee morning for the Children's Society was in October.
- There were several occasions when our well-used church bells were rung. To celebrate the 100th birthday of Vi Spencer, and on Horticultural Show Day to celebrate the centenary of the Society. In October we hosted the Framland Ringers half year meeting, when the Hoby Handbells also got an outing. It is hoped to restart a handbell group in 2025
- Other events included the visit of Leicester Cathedral with their choir for Choral Evensong. The bug hotel arrived in the church yard and children came to fill it with twigs and straw etc for the insects. The Hoby Art Group formally handed over their beautiful painted slates of insects to the church. These had been mounted and displayed by Garry and Candice Barker and their colleague Casey. The bat survey also took place over two evenings. We also have a draft children's trail produced for the Parish Church, and we hope to launch this next year
- A busy year of events and we thank all those who helped in any way.

Projects and maintenance work completed or on hold or requiring some preparatory work (2025)

- Church heating project. Await quinquennial report
- Review of our risk assessments. To be addressed in 2025
- Sadly, we were not able to proceed with the conservation of the large George III Coat of Arms.
- Water ingress... over the servery area has not been solved yet, nor issues about the nave roof.
- The recycling of blister packs fills the large green frog in church (Freddie) every week!
- The second bug hotel we hope will be completed in 2025.
- We have continued to support Melton Storehouse Foodbank throughout 2024. Sending donations in every week. With many thanks to all who support this initiative.
- The maintenance of the Churchyard & Extension changed in 2024 - noticeable improvements.

Finance of the Parish Church.

In 2024 fund raising went towards the maintenance of the church. The finances of the church will again require close attention in 2025 as the running costs of the church continue to exceed the income we receive, and this does not include finance required for repairs and maintenance etc. Insurance costs were set to raise dramatically in 2024/5 so in October we changed our insurers for a better deal and a slightly reduced cost. In December we added smart water to our roofing and windows and the insurance now covers all our roofing again. At present reserves continue to cover the shortfall, but we need to address the imbalance we have. It is a priority for the DCC in 2025 to increase our regular givers

Nicola and Vic thank Hoby again for the support the community gives the Parish Church, as we continue the work to provide a welcome to all in our community. Nicola also wishes to thank everyone for their support for her while she has been Churchwarden. She will be standing down from that role in 2025 after four years in post, remaining on the DCC, and is delighted that Ian Stonehouse has agreed to stand as Churchwarden in her place.

10.0 St. Peter's, Kirby Bellars

Alan McPherson (DCC link)

Summary: following the reforming of the DCC, a brief report (collated by St.Peters DCC prior to each PCC meeting) will explore our successes and work areas. Please find attached to this report, the minutes from the DCC meeting on 20/01/2025.

Roof Resurrectors: St. Peters continues to be supported by an active, dedicated group of friends: 'Roof Resurrectors'. Approx. 12 parishioners meeting bi-monthly, looking to support our calendar of events. Recent events include another full church for our Christmas eve service.

Eco Church: Recent successes into St. Peters gaining the EcoChurch Bronze award. We are now focussing on consolidating Bronze under the new survey scheme, as looking to the potential of a joint EcoChurch effort across the parish. Reflections from the PCC would be welcomed.

Heritage Lottery Fund: St. Peters application to Heritage Lottery Fund is progressing, with a draft application in place. The application is three-phased, with this application focussed on securing approx. £40k to commission reports and community audits for the viability and purpose on the wider project of re-roofing St. Peters, as well as installing a toilet and servery. The project team is currently working on costings the professionals needed to manage and deliver the project, in relationship with the DCC and PCC. The hope is to have this first application submitted March/April 2025, working towards July 2026 for the commencement of the second phase (once funding has been secured).

QI: St. Peters has its QI this year. Preparation work taking place, with an intention to align some of the tasks with the Heritage Lottery Fund bid.

Policies & Procedures: the DCC is working on an environmental and land management policy and procedure, with the potential that these could be developed to support the parish. Reflections from the PCC would be welcomed.

Generic: given the move towards MC, the DCC were interested how the Diocese of Leicester sees the future of the 15-20 church buildings within the MC? A large task for a small group of volunteers.

A generic email address has been created for the DCC, to create a central repository for all communication: stpeters.dcc@outlook.com

10.1 Kirby Roof Resurrectors

'Friends Of' equivalent

as above

Mission and Ministry

Contemporary Communion Services continued to be held on the 2nd Sunday of each month during the year. We were incredibly pleased to be able to welcome Bishop Martyn to lead our service in March on Mothering Sunday. There were no services held at Ragdale during Holy Week, but an additional service was held on the 4th Sunday in April. The Harvest service was held in the church in October and all gifts collected were donated to Storehouse in Melton Mowbray.

The Carol Service was held on 20th December, and we were all delighted to welcome Derek our Christmas organist, who again entertained us with his lively organ playing of some modern Christmas Carols, encouraging children and adults to join in with percussion instruments. It was lovely to be able to welcome some new residents to Ragdale especially Graham who spoke to us about his welcome to Ragdale. £100 was raised for Rainbows Hospice for Children and Young People. Refreshments of mulled wine, sausage rolls, and mince pies followed with most people staying and enjoying the evening.

No funerals took place during the year. However, as we moved into the New Year, we heard of the tragic loss of Tony Geary who with his wife Lynne had lived in Ragdale for many years until 2005. Tony had served as churchwarden for 25 years and then a treasurer and we have much to thank him for in the church. We were pleased to be able to hold a memorial service for Tony recently in All Saints' Church. We also learned of the unexpected death of Liz Buxton, Liz had also given tirelessly of her time to the church and had worked very closely with Tony. Liz had moved to be nearer to her family following her husband Jim's death 2020.

We were able to celebrate one wedding in Ragdale this year, that of Paul and Melody. Melody had lived in the village for a brief time during the Covid years and had supported the church and become a valued member of the congregation. It was wonderful to be able to welcome her back with Paul and celebrate their special day with them.

At the ADCM meeting in March there were no changes to the members of the DCC.

Special Events

A special service of Loving Remembrance was held during the afternoon of 3rd November when people were able to light a candle and pray for those departed who were in their minds, this service was well attended.

A meeting was held at the church in October for all the village to come along and enjoy cheese and wine and talk about what the church means to them, what they can do for the church and to talk to each other. Unfortunately, the response was disappointingly poor.

The church was open for refreshments on 30th November after villagers had been planting fruit trees kindly donated by the Bowley family for a village orchard on their land by the glamping site.

Fabric of Church Building

Following a robust selection procedure undertaken by Hoby Church to appoint an architect to conduct the Quinquennial Inspection. It was agreed that Ragdale church would use the same company. The Quinquennial Inspection was overdue, and this was finally completed in September. The report is still being reviewed to identify the most urgent work needed and the financial implications. The removal of the ivy covering the churchyard wall has now been completed and this has revealed necessary work need to the wall. A new gate to the churchyard has been made, donated and installed by a villager.

The churchyard continues to be mowed and cared for by Siobhan Bowley and we are very appreciative of this help.

Fundraising / Social Activities

We have held a few coffee mornings during the year which raise approximately £50 each time, although the reason we hold them is to bring people together for two hours, to enjoy coffee, cake and conversation. This year we returned to holding a cream tea event in June, this was very successful. The weather was a little overcast but dry and approximately 40 people attended and enjoyed the afternoon. The total sum raised was £525.

12.0 All Saints, Rotherby

Sue Smith & Lesley Potter (Churchwardens)

Lesley and I have had a busy year looking after family members, sadly Lesley's father passed away in the summer, since then she has thrown herself into the Champing project where by anyone who applies can pay to stay in the Church over night this is organised by the Churches conversation trust, they take a commission of 25% plus booking fee and vat, they take all our bookings and update us every Thursday morning. We have kept the village informed all the way through and most are in favour of us going ahead, a question of parking was brought up but as only 4 people at any time will be staying we cannot see this will be a problem. We hope this will bring in much needed revenue to maintain the Church building bookings will be available from April 2025.

We continue to serve breakfast before our 10-30 service the 1st Sunday in each month, Lesley and Sue regularly help in the service, David Parr a member of the Wednesday group leads us in a short meditation at most services. The mid monthly service, a communion held in Rotherby at 8-30 is enjoyed by a small number of members from the Upper Wreake, we start around the table with coffee with a short Bible Study and quiet time, leading on to Communion we find this is a great way to share the word of God together sometimes with a visual aid a poem or picture that brings us together.

Meetings are still going ahead regarding Minster Communities hopefully this year will show us the way ahead and what our future will be within the Upper Wreake.

Lesley and I supported the confirmation candidates where one of our Church members was confirmed, this was a very special occasion for everyone.

Our winter warmer took place on 5th January where hot casseroles were served with crusty bread along with wines this has proved to be a popular event and suits us better in the New Year when everything seems to go a bit quiet after Christmas.

The Organ has been tuned this year work still needs to be completed on this in the future.

August Cream Tea's again a great success folk come from all around we are really putting our mark on the map, this year we were able to use our servery to full capacity now that we have a serving space to serve from our highest return yet over £1000.

November 5th firework night again a great success, hot dogs were served and a fantastic firework display enjoyed by everyone.

Our Carol Service took place as usual where the Wednesday group performed a short drama which proved to be great fun,

The DCC have met three times this year to keep up to date with all events and news.

13.0 Bellringers

Martin Paling, Tower Captain

There were no specific fundraising activities during the year, but donations raised £180.

The local band of Tower bell ringers consists of 19 people now, most of whom have met weekly throughout the year, to continue to develop their skills and to ring for all of the Church services and for special occasions. Since September, three Teenagers have joined the Team, to learn to ring and to work to achieve Bronze and Silver level in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

The bells and their fittings in the Belfries at both Hoby and Kirby remain in a safe condition for ringing, but some maintenance work may become necessary in due course. Taylors Bellfounders of Loughborough conduct an annual maintenance check to the installations at both Towers. A new stay was fitted to the Treble bell at Kirby in February, following accidental breakage. The Belfry at Kirby was swept in August, to remove the thin layer of airborne dust and debris, which had accumulated since last year.

The bells at Hoby were rung on 9 February, to celebrate the Baptism of Jo Perry on that day and Jo was one of the band of ringers. All five bells rang out again, half muffled, on 13 March, prior to the funeral of villager Bill Roberts.

A Quarter Peal was rung at Hoby, to celebrate the 100th Birthday of Violet Spencer on 21 March and in recognition of her many years as Churchwarden at Rotherby Church and also her work in the wider Parish.

6 June marked the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy during WWII. In commemoration of that event and to express a wish for Peace, all of the Bells at Hoby and Kirby rang out from 6:30pm. Team members also rang the bells at Saxelbye Church at 8:30pm, prior to the lighting of that village's Beacon.

24 members of Rearsby Young Farmers Group visited Kirby Church in May, to listen to and play on the Handbells from both Kirby and Hoby Churches. They also took the opportunity to chime the Tower bells.

The Kirby Handbells were also rung in June for Burton Lazars W.I. and then during the Carol Service at Kirby Church on 24 December. The Handbell ringers have practiced regularly throughout the year.

Ringers from Warmington, Northamptonshire, visited Kirby on 29 June as part of that Team's Day Out ringing in East Leicestershire.

A Quarter Peal was rung at Hoby on 3 July, in celebration of the life of Ann Brown, of Anstey, who died on 14 June. Ann had been a long time supporter, ringer and former Secretary of both The Leicester Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers and of The Society of Framland Ringers.

Kirby Bells were rung on 1 August, to celebrate the Wedding of Rachael Cole and Christopher Bryan. Rachael had rung the Handbells in the early 2000's, as a member of the then childrens' band.

The Wedding of villagers Adrian Rawlins and Joanna Knopp, at Kirby on 21 September, was also marked by the bells being rung.

A special Service was held at Kirby on 29 September, to celebrate the upswing in interest in bellringing over the last two years, in the Upper Wreake and beyond. The Service was well attended

by ringers and non-ringers from across the area. Tower bells and Handbells were rung before, during and after the Service.

The Society of Framland Ringers visited Kirby in February and Hoby in October for their monthly meetings. At the Hoby meeting, the set of Handbells bells from Hoby Church were used to ring a new composition by Sophia Stonehouse, a unique anthem that she wrote to celebrate the refurbishment at Taylors Bellfoundry. The piece had been previously performed at Taylors for their official re-opening and was featured on local TV.

Hoby's Tower bells were rung also to celebrate/mark the following occasions:

~ On 7 September for the Centenary of Hoby & District Horticultural Society.

~ On 20 October, a Quarter Peal for long time villager, Jean Morris, who celebrated her 91st Birthday on 19 October.

~ On 26 October before a Thanksgiving Service for the life of Lesley Case, who died on 24 September aged 96.

~ On 19 December, a Quarter Peal to remember Rupert St.Alban Rae Dady, who had died the previous week. Rupert was the Brother of Sophia Stonehouse, a member of our Team of Bell ringers.

~ On Christmas Day morning and then late on 31 December, to mark the end of 2024 and the arrival of 2025.

14.0 Deanery Synod

No Report

15.0 Financial Report

Receipts and Payments for the Year ended 31 December 2024 and the Statement of Assets at 31 December 2024

RECEIPTS	DCC						DCC Total	2023
	Brooksby 2024	Frisby 2024	Hoby 2024	Kirby 2024	Ragdale 2024	Rotherby 2024		
1 Fund Raising	520.14		4724.73	4937.11	829.50	2292.73	13,304.21	19,627.91
2 Wedding and Funeral Fees	3154.00	378.00	1128.00	796.00	594.00	726.00	6,776.00	9,569.46
3 Donations	1185.67	362.00	3854.00	5470.00	934.00	714.50	12,520.17	8,861.64
4 Collections	1145.99	687.01	1226.05	848.65	578.87	472.99	4,959.56	5,574.40
5 Sundry	259.68	672.99	463.78	0.00		112.80	1,509.25	5,280.39
6 Grants						714.50	714.50	2,513.02
7 VAT Reclaim			750.00	798.74		770.56	2,319.30	3,448.63
8 Interest	97.63		430.10		96.67		624.40	1,176.62
9 Planned (Regular) Giving	665.00	9507.73	9368.00	2081.99	3210.00	3440.00	28,272.72	25,105.67
10 Income Tax Recovered (Gift Aid)	691.34		3254.88			1877.09	5,823.31	7,924.99
11 Donated Collections			768.51				768.51	1,927.80
12 CCLA Transfer		2715.28					2,715.28	8,815.00
Total Receipts	7,719.45	14,323.01	25,968.05	14,932.49	6,243.04	11,121.17	80,307.21	99,825.53

PAYMENTS	DCC						DCC Total	2023
	Brooksby 2024	Frisby 2024	Hoby 2024	Kirby 2024	Ragdale 2024	Rotherby 2024		
1 Parish Contribution (Diocese)	1836.00	6825.00	2450.00	600.00	1560.00	2494.80	15,765.80	15,513.00
2 Cluster Levy (SWF)	294.00	1650.00	888.00	1200.00	486.00	582.00	5,100.00	4,434.00
3 Organ Tuning and Repairs		579.35			204.00		783.35	218.43
4 Power, Rates etc	632.52	634.78	459.82	1521.75	294.23	853.65	4,396.75	4,409.27
5 Fees paid	772.00		414.00	238.00	32.52	425.00	1,881.52	1,255.58
6 Donations etc	516.50	252.00	943.51		36.00		1,748.01	3,522.70
7 Church Insurance Premium	2236.15	2734.19	3751.15	3669.33	1405.99	2993.23	16,790.04	16,252.98
8 Maintenance Church yard			1825.00	560.00		650.00	3,035.00	4,435.18
9 Sundry		829.38	1320.73	1581.74	61.60	294.57	4,088.02	9,010.39
10 Maintenance	2311.56		6916.09	325.45			9,553.10	10,706.01
11 Building Repairs/Alarms					735.60		735.60	821.40
12 Major Building Works	0.00	3648.24				849.82	4,498.06	20,954.15
13 Professional Fees					960.00		0.00	0.00
14 CCLA Transfer							0.00	0.00
Total Payments	8598.73	17152.94	18968.30	9696.27	5775.94	9143.07	68,375.25	91,533.09

Movement in Funds CURRENT	-879.28	-2,829.93	6,999.75	5,236.22	467.10	1,978.10	10,971.96	8,292.44
Movement in ADDITIONAL Funds/ Accounts e.g. Deposit/ Fabric/ Bell/ CCLA		-236.73						
Balance at start of year	7,743.96	46,560.55	60,562.66	29,612.63	14,803.93	12,774.89	172,058.62	167,454.14
Statement of Assets at 31 Dec'r 2023	6,864.68	43,493.89	67,562.41	34,848.85	15,271.03	14,752.99	183,030.58	175,746.58