

# PARISH CHURCH NEWS

**Ss. Peter & Paul, Clare  
with St. Mary the Virgin, Poslingford**

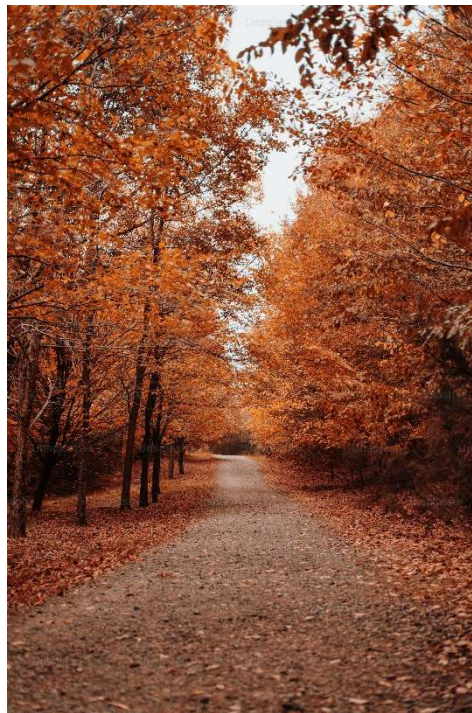
**The Rev'd Mark Woodrow**

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(Usual Rest Day: Monday)

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**No. 450  
October 2025**



**Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too.**

*John Keats (1795-1821)*

## **Rector's Ramblings – October 2025** **(The Light in the Long Nights)**

My dear friends,

As I sit to write this month's contribution, a familiar coolness has begun to creep into the air. The mornings are a little crisper, the evenings draw in sooner, and the trees in our churchyards are starting to blush with the fiery colours of autumn. It's a beautiful, yet poignant, time of year, as we witness the slow, inevitable turn of the seasons. The vibrant greens of summer give way to the golden hues of autumn, a gentle reminder that nothing in this world is permanent.

I always feel a sense of melancholy as the nights lengthen. The long, light evenings of summer, filled with the hum of bees and the late songs of birds, now feel like a distant memory. This growing darkness can sometimes feel heavy, and it's easy to find ourselves a bit low as we brace for the months ahead. But even in this transition, there is a profound beauty and a spiritual truth to be found. The natural world is entering a time of rest and preparation, drawing inward before the new life of spring. It's a cycle that mirrors our own spiritual journeys. Sometimes we need to retreat, to rest, and to reflect in the quiet dark before we can bloom again.

As we move through October, we approach a time of remembrance that offers a different kind of light. At the end of the month, we have Hallowe'en, or All Hallows' Eve, which is a wonderful opportunity for community fun and festivities. But it's also the prelude to something more profound: All Saints' Sunday on 2nd November, we celebrate the lives of all the saints, not just the famous ones you see in stained-glass windows, but every faithful person who has lived and died in Christ. It's a day to remember the 'great cloud of witnesses' (Hebrews 12:1) who have gone before us.

This is a powerful message for the darker nights of the year. When the world feels shadowed, we are reminded of the radiant light of Christ that shone in the lives of ordinary people - your parents, grandparents, a beloved friend or mentor, or a faithful neighbour. Their lives, lived with faith and love, are a testament that the light of Christ is never extinguished. It is passed from one generation to the next, burning brightly in the darkest corners of the world.

So, as you snuggle up with a warm cup of tea on a chilly evening, remember this. The darkness is only a part of the journey. The light of the saints, the light of Christ, and the light of our shared faith shine on, a beacon of hope and a promise that new life will always follow. Let us carry that light with us, sharing it with those around us, so that even in the lengthening nights, our community may be a place of warmth, hope, and peace.

With every blessing,

**Mark**

The Revd Mark Woodrow (Rector)



## **PCC NEWS**

The PCC met again in September and the following is a resumé of its proceedings:

A faculty application is now being submitted to the DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee on the Care of Churches) for renovation work to be carried out on the Parclose screen (Nicholas has written about this elsewhere in the Magazine) and for some adjustments to be made to the base of the Font, this will involve removing two of the projecting steps, which have long posed a trip hazard.

Work on the new lighting system is progressing slowly – more information when there is something fresh to report.

Regrettably, due to the anticipated lack of numbers, there will be no Harvest Lunch or Supper this year, but there will still be a Harvest Festival Service on Sunday 5th October at 11am.

Meanwhile, new bulbs have been fitted on the belfry staircase and attention is to be paid to re-lighting in the Lady Chapel.

Finally, a new safe has now been installed in the vestry.



The first season of the very successful regular Saturday lunchtime Coffee Concerts have almost now come to an end, but do not despair for there is to be an extra one “The Fiddler’s Elbow” (a violine and Spanish guitar duo) on Saturday 18th October at the usual time of 11am for Coffee and 11:30am for the concert itself.

However, it seems that now is an appropriate time to thank Christopher Moore for initiating this most enjoyable feature, as well as the many artists who have so kindly entertained us on a variety of instruments, another example of how our churches can be used for bringing people together in a social and artistic setting.

Thank you again Christopher, for your hard work and choice of musicians, and for all those who helped in providing and serving the refreshments beforehand. it is very much appreciated!

## FROM THE REGISTERS OF CLARE & POSLINGFORD

September 2025

Clare: Wedding - Shannon-Marie Clerkin & Jacob Cohen-Setton

### TREES

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree;

A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

*Joyce Kilmer (Alfred Joyce Kilmer) 1886-1918  
American writer and poet, killed in action in France*

### Sarah Smith's Commissioning as an Ordinand – Sunday 21st September



Congratulations to Sarah Smith, a member of our community in Stoke by Clare, and who regularly joins us in Clare, who on Sunday 21st September was formally commissioned by Bishop Graham as an Ordinand.

An Ordinand is the title given to someone who has begun formal training in preparation for ordination as a Deacon, and subsequently a Priest.

You will begin to see Sarah leading and assisting at services over the coming weeks and months as part of her training.

God willing Sarah will be Ordained Deacon in June 2026 (*the same day as her son Edmund, who is already known to many of us, is due to be Ordained Priest – it will be a day of great celebration!*)



# Conservation of the Clare Parclose Screen

Nicholas Turner

At the far end of the church's South aisle, behind the new grand piano and in front of the organ, is a beautifully carved, early Tudor oak parclose screen, datable 1500–20, which is scheduled to undergo a conservation campaign from April 2026.



Almost certainly erected in memory of a wealthy resident of either Clare or its environs, the identity of the deceased remains unknown. According to the report submitted in July by the London firm of restorers who will carry out the conservation work, Bainbridge Conservation, a shield bearing the de Clare family's triple chevrons has been identified in the upper section of the parclose.

The de Clares were a powerful Anglo-Norman family whose influence and wealth extended for much of the Middle Ages, though by 1500 their prominence was on the wane. As the conservation process progresses, further evidence of the identity of the deceased may come to light. Naturally, help towards the cost of preserving this treasure for the future will be welcome. ***(Details as to how to donate are included at the end of the article.)***

Some doubt has been raised as to where the parclose was first built. A suggestion of some years ago is that it may have been transferred from elsewhere in the present church or even moved from another church altogether. In his admirable study of Clare, David Hatton discussed the parclose at some length, and it was his view that the screen was once in the Lady Chapel of the church, in the North chancel. With new evidence gathered next spring, it is hoped this issue will be resolved. Growing evidence, however, suggests that it was not imported from elsewhere but has always remained *in situ*.



The basic structure is sound, but some patchwork restoration was already undertaken in the 19th century. As illustrated here, for instance, a rotting section of one of the interior mullions has been replaced by new wood. The worst wood rot and insect damage, however, is to be found in the large horizontal beams at the base of the structure, while much superficial damage has occurred to the exterior panelling, painted dark umber in crude imitation of wood grain, probably in the 19th century. Throughout the parclose, accumulated dust and dirt impairs the legibility of the mouldings, tracery and decorations. Addressing these issues in the Bainbridge programme is the treatment of rotted or damaged woodwork, which will be either replaced or consolidated with B-72 dissolved in acetone.



The delicate carving, as well as the different surfaces of the wood panelling, including that painted dark umber imitation oak graining, will be cleaned and afterwards given protective coatings of acrylic.



The inside of the parclose is familiar to most as the location of slanted cupboards, beneath one of the windows of the

South aisle, where albums of photos of past and present members of the congregation, as well as binders with information about the history of the church are kept. Although useful for storage and display, the cupboards take up a fair amount of floor space, giving the impression that the interior of the parclose seems smaller than it is.



The aim of this note is to bring attention to the remarkable survival of this fine example of late Medieval woodwork and to point out both its historical interest and the possible significance of the floral symbolism in the decoration. This is echoed in the ornamentation of other furnishings and monuments in the church from roughly the same period. Once the conservation is completed, the overall legibility of the parclose will be conspicuous and will be a lesson to all of us to look after it for the future.

The few surviving parclose screens in Suffolk all date from around 1500 and are most frequently located in the nave aisles, either abutting the rood screen, as does the example in Clare, or at only a short distance away from it. They are invariably raised on a stone base about a foot above floor level, with the wooden sides fixed to the edges of the base. Usually made of oak (rather than stone), the screens were meant to be showy, with attractive

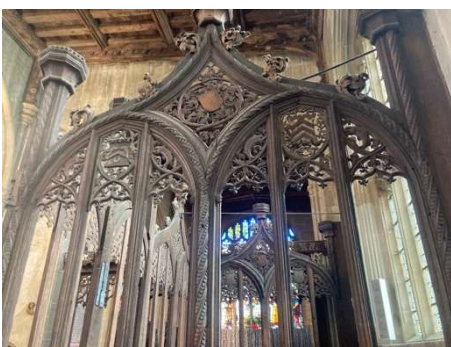


architectural design and eye-catching ornament. They were built to commemorate a deceased patron, whose tomb was normally situated in the centre of the interior. Apart from elevating the parclose above floor level, a base larger in area than the tomb itself may also have served to spread the weight of the tomb as widely as possible across the aisle floor.

The screens also served as small chapels or shrines, giving privacy to worshippers praying for the salvation of the soul of the deceased. An idea of the interior layout may be gained from an image of the inside of the remarkable Spring Parclose in Lavenham Church, erected to the memory of Thomas Spring and his wife Alice soon after 1523, and very likely completed before the English Reformation of 1534. A kneeler appears in front of the tomb and beyond it a small altar. Several monumental brasses commissioned to their memory of the Springs decorated the slab but were stolen long ago, the shaped recesses in the stone into which they were once fitted now providing the only evidence of their appearance.

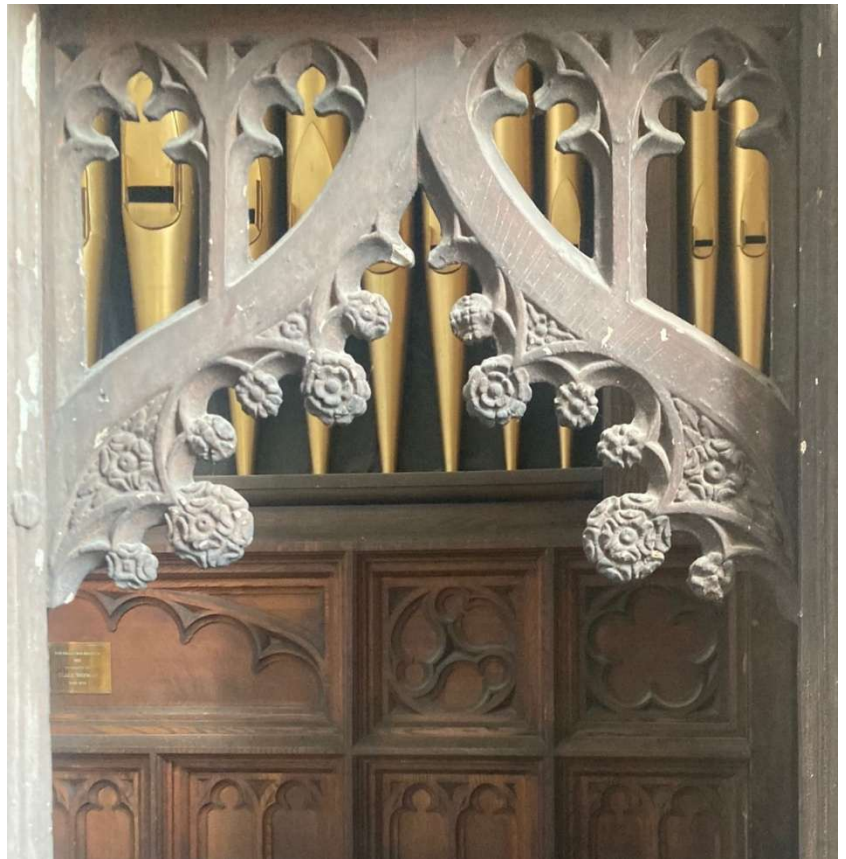


Was there once a tomb in the centre of the Clare parclose? This is hard to judge as the floor is presently protected by hessian matting, but even its removal will not necessarily provide evidence of the existence of an early 16th-century tomb as the Victorian restoration campaign of the woodwork might well have extended to the floor, obscuring the footprint of what may once have been a tomb. Sometimes, perhaps through lack of funds, a tomb was not placed inside a newly built parclose. In Lavenham, the Thomas Spourne Parclose (1500), in the South aisle of the church, was empty until 1908 when the stone tomb of Thomas Ponder and his wife was moved from the graveyard outside to protect its carvings.



Like other such screens, the Clare Parclose is divided horizontally into two levels and vertically into bays. Decorated panelling fills the lower level, while a line of open arches, with elegant tracery in the Perpendicular style, articulates the upper level. The arches are topped by an intricately carved cresting, which is perhaps the finest and most distinctive feature of the screen and probably its best-preserved part, very likely because out of easy reach. In this beautiful decorative band, light from the window behind pierces the delicate forms of the carvings in silhouette, giving a memorable effect of fragility in a decoration that alludes so strongly in its symbolism to the afterlife.

The North and West fronts of the parclose were purpose made, while that to the East borrows from a section of the former rood screen, thereby economizing on labour and materials but also creating an anomaly (a point addressed below). Most rood screens, like that at Clare, were destroyed soon after the English Reformation of 1534, because they embodied what was then thought to be the 'heretical' interpretation of the Eucharist as practised by the Roman Church. Sixteen rosettes of five different sizes decorate the spandrels and points of the cusps of the arch, the rose aptly symbolizing the blood of Christ shed at the Crucifixion (though it can also symbolize the Virgin Mary). Presumably the same arch was repeated in other panels ranged across the lower upper tier of the screen.



Rosettes similar to those of the rood screen panel also appear in a fragment of a late 15th-century capstone to a tomb with slanted sides, located behind the North choir stalls. They likewise are set on the tips of the cusps, but this time incorporated into an arabesque design, but unfortunately the modelling of the petal has not survived as well in the soft stone as in the wooden panel. The trapezoidal shape of the capstone may indicate that it once belonged to a tomb with converging long sides, perhaps some 2 to 3 feet high, that once stood some 3 to 4 feet away from the parclose and directly parallel to it. The stone tomb must have been removed by the mid-19th

century: only its footprint survives, thanks to the layout of the tiles in the South aisle preserving its shape.





The cresting of the parclose boasts the greatest concentration of Christian symbols, which are repeated in a pattern across its length. Principal among them is the 'M.A.R.I.A.' monogram surmounted by a crown decorated with three stars (top left). How all five letters of her name are superimposed one above the other is hard to see, but that is not the point. To each side, the monogram is supported by gryphons, fantastic creatures with the body of a lion and the head, wings, and claws of an eagle. The earthly and heavenly realms of animal and bird are believed to signify Christ's dual nature as both human and deity.



Alongside the M.A.R.I.A. with gryphons motif are two devices, each with a pomegranate split open to reveal its multiple seeds within, about to burst forth. In Christian iconography, the pomegranate symbolizes Christ's Resurrection and its inner seeds the souls of his church saved by his blood, otherwise its juice. The pomegranate is one of the heraldic devices of Catherine of Aragon (1485–1536), the first wife of Henry VIII of England (*reg.* 1509–47).



In recent accounts of the parclose, a possible connection with Catherine of Aragon has been pointed out, but this appears to be contradicted by the little flower that sits on top of the pomegranate. Despite its much-simplified shape, this is likely to be an anemone, which is yet another symbol of the Resurrection, a theme central to the parclose, since it references the hoped for salvation of the deceased. Immediately below the small anemone flower on top of the pomegranate appears a much larger one, amongst stylized pointed leaves in the spandrels of the arch.

Different-sized anemone flowers, some with their stylized leaves and some without, appear throughout the parclose decoration. According to Christian symbolism, the red anemone alludes to the blood of Christ and often appears in scenes of the Crucifixion. In the image to the right, anemones and their leaves decorate the principal cusps of the interior arches of the parclose—two flowers on their own are attached to the points of the two inner cusps, directed like spotlights at what may once have been a tomb in the centre of the space. On the two lateral cusps are inverted triangles of anemone leaves, fitted over the two points like thimbles.





Anemones crop up once again in the floral decoration of the parclose, even in the more modest decoration of the lower panelled level of the exterior. They appear in the spandrels of some of the simple arch and tracery panels with the larger anemone motif, among stylized leaves in the spandrels themselves and the smaller renderings of the flower on its own at the tip of the cusp beneath.

Worth noting is the part played by floral and plant symbolism in the decoration of Clare church at the time. This is exhibited to its fullest extent in the decoration of the much-weathered 15th-century oak South door, the iconography of which requires further study. Similar stylized floral and vegetative motifs might well indicate that the craftsmanship of the parclose, which is not too far distant in date, was local to the town. In the central upright panel of the smaller opening of the door anemones nestle within stylized representations of their distinctive, pointed foliage much as they do in some of the carvings of the parclose. Among the carvings in the South door and its surround is the de Clare coat of arms, a possible allusion to a generous bequest to the church by Elizabeth de Burgh after her death in 1360.



*In writing this note I have been helped by fellow members of the congregation, especially Anna Moore, Andy Charlton and, as always, by my wife Jane. The conservation of this important church treasure will surely unlock many secrets and doubtless they will be the subject of a sequel to this note.*

### *Contribute if you can*

If you are able, please contribute towards the cost of the parclose conservation campaign, a QR code is given below .

### **Can you help finance our current Projects to repair and improve our Church?**

As you will have read above, the PCC are looking to make some significant repairs to the Parclose and also to improve the church lighting.

If you are in the fortunate position of being able to help with the cost of these repairs and improvements, please make cheques payable to **"PCC Clare with Poslingford"** writing "Fabric Fund" on the rear of the cheque.

Alternatively, you can make a donation to the Fabric Fund using the QR Code or via the following link:

**<https://tinyurl.com/ClareChurchRestoration>**







# HARVEST APPEAL 2025

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## **Stour Valley Benefice - Services for October 2025**

### **Saturday, 4th October**

Wixoe:	18:30	Harvest Festival	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
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### **Sunday, 5th October**

*Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity*

Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Cavendish:	10:30	Harvest Festival	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Clare:	11:00	Harvest Festival	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>

### **Sunday, 12th October**

*Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity*

Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by Mr Roger McKenny</i>
Hundon:	09:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Cavendish:	10:30	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Clare:	16:00	Evensong	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>

### **Sunday, 19th October**

*Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity*

Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Liz Paxton</i>
Cavendish:	10:30	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Clare:	11:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Liz Paxton</i>
Poslingford:	16:00	Harvest Festival	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>

### **Tuesday 21st October**

Hundon:	14:30	School Harvest Festival
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### **Thursday 23rd October**

Cavendish:	14:00	School Harvest Festival
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### **Sunday, 26th October**

*Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity*

Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Wixoe:	09:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Cavendish:	10:30	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Clare:	11:00	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by Mrs Barbara Hill</i>
Hundon:	16:00	Evening Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>

### **Sunday, 2nd November**

*All Saints Sunday*

Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Liz Paxton</i>
Cavendish:	10:30	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by Mrs Sarah Smith</i>
Clare:	11:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Liz Paxton</i>
Clare:	15:00	Service for All Souls/Saints	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>

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**The closing date for contributions to the Magazine is now the 25th of the month  
(for inclusion in the next month's issue)**