

# St George's Church, Donnington



## Welcome - a message from St George's PCC on behalf of the people of Donnington

We are a PCC firmly rooted in reality but with our eyes ever heavenward believing that through worship and prayer, the breaking of bread and the study of God's word, we will be better shaped by God's purpose in our lives. We are looking for a priest who will help us proclaim the good news of Jesus, offer worship which is glorifying to God and helps us open our doors easily to friend and stranger.

We are a resilient church council and, despite this being our third Vacancy in 12 years, we keep showing up and feeding our Christian community with steadfastness, enthusiasm and living out Christ's teachings in all that we do.

Resilient too in the way we have worked with a range of priests during; a priest we shared with St Wilfrid's Hospice, a recent House for Duty priest and, during the Vacancies, a stream of visiting priests all of whom we have welcomed and from whom we have learned. It shows that we are flexible and willing to embrace the challenges posed by the changing face of the parish structure.

So this, we believe, is an exciting opportunity and we pray that God will send us the right person for our church and our community.

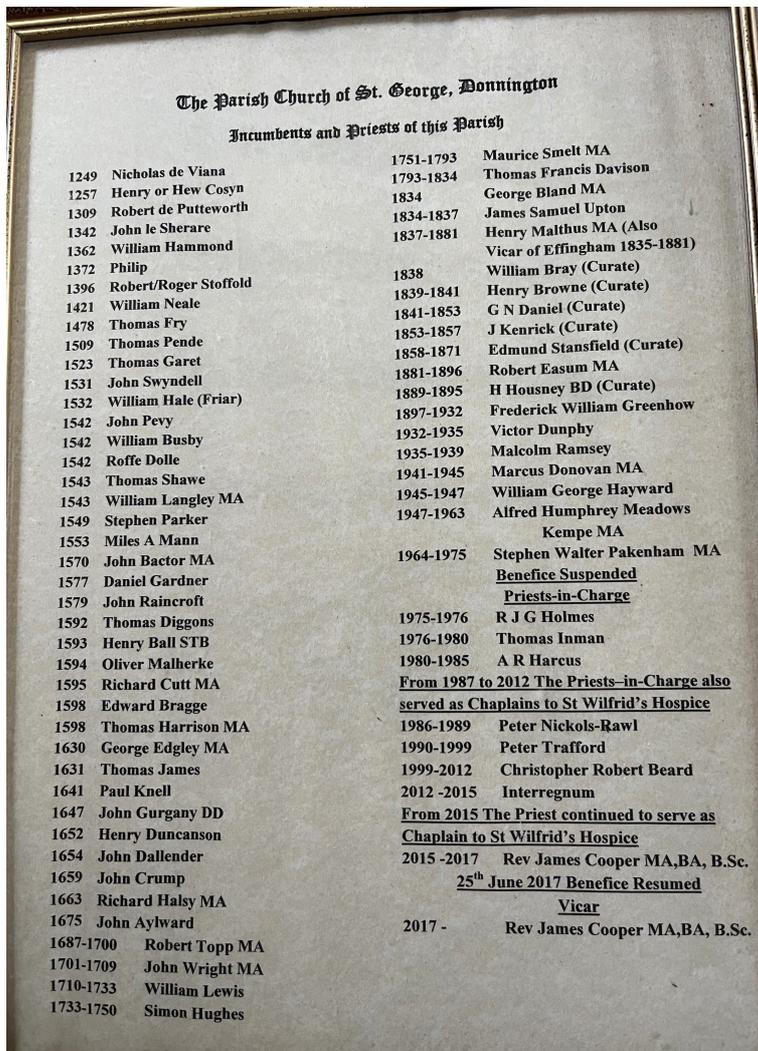
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# 1. The Vicar we are looking for.

Drawing on our experience there are things that we believe will help us..

- **Experience.** We want someone who has a lot of life experience to draw upon and who is well versed in scripture and can convey this in language that is relatable.
- **Confident.** We want someone who can lead us in worship across the breadth of Anglican worship. At home with the oldies as well as the children and everything in between
- **Humble.** a deep listener who uses all their senses to see, hear and acknowledge the uniqueness in each individual. Both a leader and a follower who works with us to spread the Word.
- **Personable.** Able to laugh and have fun with us. Able to be still and support us when we weep. Able to work with us through challenges. Able to maintain harmonious relations whilst confident enough to make tough decisions and move us on when we get stuck.
- **Visible.** We are a community orientated Parish and the Holy Spirit is calling us to fill that space where Faith and non-faith meet. We want a Priest who is as at home preaching a Sunday sermon as she or he is in talking to people in the queue of our local Co-Op.



So, looking at our history of priests, you might ask what happened after 2017? Rev'd James Cooper jointly served as vicar of St George's and Chaplain at St Wilfrid's Hospice, a symbiotic relationship which worked well. He retired from the ministry in 2022 and sadly died in 2025. He was much loved. Following the interregnum Rev'd Caroline Brown became incumbent in 2024 on a House for Duty basis, it was her first parish as incumbent and everyone did a lot of learning. She stood down in Autumn 2025 and has now moved on. The PCC has reflected on the experience and that is captured in the above description of the priest we are looking for.

We have always been very supportive of our priests. We pay expenses, cover council tax, water and phone bills. We expect our priests to take annual leave and, with an excellent range of alternative retired priests in the area who know us, you will find flexibility and resource to cover annual and sick leave and those Sundays when our priest is unavailable for whatever reason. We also want our priest to embrace off site development opportunities and retreats.

If issues arise that cause concern we wish these to be openly shared and solutions found in a Christian spirit of support and understanding.

And to be clear, St George's PCC has made no special arrangements with the Bishop on the grounds of theological conviction regarding the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood and the Episcopate in accordance with the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests.

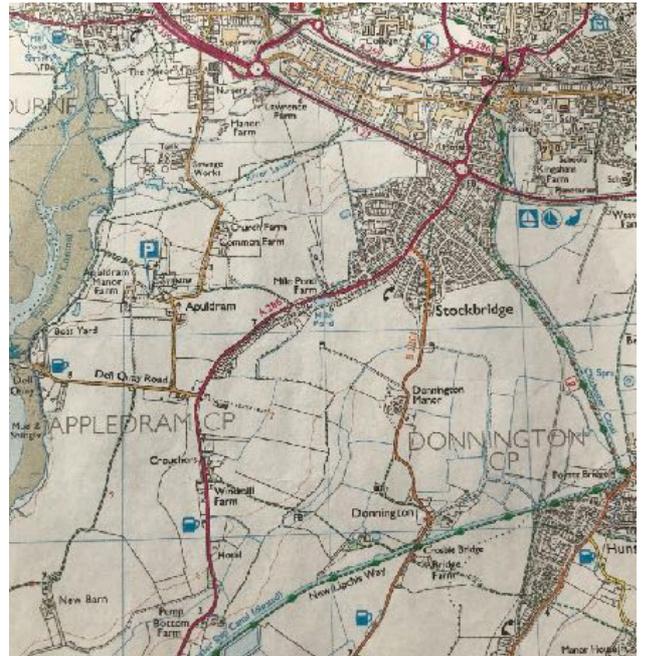
## 2. About our Parish

### The location

Donnington Parish lies to the south of Chichester and a pleasant 20 minute walk along a canal path will take you into the City. It is bordered by the A27 to the north and by farmland and Chichester Harbour (an AONB)

Old Donnington lies to the south of the parish with 40 properties. Stockbridge is the main residential centre of the Parish with 1050 homes.

In recent years more new properties have been built including a 110 housing estate of private and social housing. A number of smaller infill developments have been built. Whilst elsewhere in Chichester you will find large new estates being built, Donnington has managed to grow but maintain a more local feel with good green space and a better mix of homes.



### The people

The 2011 census was of a population of 1,994 - we estimate 2,300 are now resident and the number is growing as the area is very desirable with properties - especially family ones - being snapped up as soon as they go on the market. There is a real mixture of 'classes' of people - outwardly giving the impression of 'upwardly mobile home owners' you do not need to scratch deeply to find people on low incomes, living in social housing and just getting by.

There is no centre of employment with those of working age mainly commuting to jobs elsewhere, although a growing number have continued to 'work from home'. According to the 2011 census we have low levels of child, working age or pension age poverty. We are not an ethnically diverse parish.

There are no schools in the parish but plenty close by. We have links to the excellent Bishop Luffa - a Church of England school - and would like these to be stronger.

There are a few corner shops, but no social centre such as pub or restaurant. There are two play grounds hidden away. In fact with the exception of our own St George's Parish Hall there is no place inside Donnington where people naturally come together or find community.

1 in 4 of our residents are over 65 with a similar proportion living alone. The land left by the hospice has been bought and transformed into a brand new private residential care home which has recently opened. It will have 76 beds. There is also an existing residential home in the parish with 28 beds. We will therefore see 5% plus of Donnington residents in residential care and would like to do more to engage with the homes and help generate more of an 'all age' community.

### 3. Our worship.

All our regular eucharistic Sunday services are held at 10 a.m. Attendance usually nudges 20 and realistically we don't expect numbers to explode, but what we can say is that everyone is fully engaged and no one has 'walked off' these past 6 years to find an alternative form of worship in the area.

On '**even Sundays**' we worship in our beautiful and well cared-for Parish Church which is down a lane in the middle of 3 adjoining fields. You wouldn't know you were a mile from the City. These services are traditional and we use Common Worship.

Music is a big part of these services and we are blessed to have a brilliant organist Alan Thurlow. Trained at Durham he became Director of Music and organist at Chichester Cathedral (from 1980 until his retirement in 2008). A man of passion and care he oversaw the installation of the organ and it is maintained under his loving care with external professional support. We don't have a regular choir but Alan draws one together for our Carol Service and Evensongs.

On '**odd Sundays**' we worship in our Hall which is in the middle of our centre of population. Here we use a 'cut back' Family Service. Music and hymns at the hall is an eclectic mix of traditional and modern and played through a large screen TV to which we sing along - and it works.

On first Sunday of the month we have held the service in something like Cafe Church - big table with activities for the children and card tables set around the DIY altar for the adults. And everyone has croissants! We have experimented with this format over the years and are more than happy to try other styles.

#### Other Services

Our Easter, Advent and Christmas services are a joy; and again we look to experiment such as a Sedar meal in addition to the poignancy of Maundy Thursday in the upper room, Good Friday's cross and nails and the church fit to burst on Easter Day. On Advent Sundays we hold our short Tree of Hope service in the hall car park when we switch on the star over our roof and the tree lights up. there is an added twist to this service as the children are asked to bring presents to give away to a charity that makes sure they go to families that would otherwise have nothing.

We hold the occasional evensong using the Book of Common Prayer (a recent one in conjunction with the Prayer Society). Rogation Sunday sees us walking around the neighbouring fields and stopping every so often for a simple hymn or a piece of poetry (for instance Sussex by Kipling). We have tried a pet service too. We like to hold baptisms as part of our 10 am service, but we cater for the very occasional separate family group baptisms as well. We are a great setting for a wedding, but no more than 1 or 2 a year usually take place. There was 1 funeral service last year and 3 internment of ashes.



St George's Church



Christingle in the hall



Evensong with birdsong

## 4. St. George's in the community

Our engagement with the village community and wider world is important to us and the Covid pandemic provided unexpected opportunities for members of our church community to lead a village scheme called Donnington+Connected as volunteers giving practical support to neighbours. We have continued to build this relationship.

In April 2020 we set up a Foodbank drop-off point and we still hold this every Saturday morning between 10 and 12 staffed by both our regular churchgoers and local people drawn to our ambition. An ambition that has seen us collect 22,000 KGs of food and life's essentials that the Chichester Foodbank distributes to those in need. We also act as a distribution point for Kid's Lunch Boxes during school holidays.

In April 2021 we opened George's - a community cafe that also meets every Saturday between 10 and 12. Serving coffee and home made cake at way below High Street prices it has drawn in people from across the community with groups also coming from the nearby residential care home providing community connection and a warm space in winter. Together with a weekly Book and Puzzle swap we have created a Hub in a community where no other space exists. It has been spiritual to see people come and open up to a listening ear about their concerns - it is hallowed ground.

Our Advent services show St George's very much alive and well in our community and over the past 2 years we have organised Family Fun Days where parents can bring children for an afternoon of crafts and games. As a parish we have always been open to ideas.

We are very conscious that our Parish Hall is the only venue where people can meet and we are keen to maximise its use - to build a stronger more inclusive community, to show our church at the heart of that and to generate income. We want to maximise use of the hall (but never at the expense of our own use or the standards we like to keep) so have set aside a Community Fund to help new non-commercial ventures get underway.



## 5. Our resources

### Our People

As of March 2026 we have no churchwardens, both the previous individuals having stepped down at the 2025 APCM for different personal reasons without replacement. We have a PCC of 6 plus a secretary/treasurer. We actually have 2 Safeguarding officers at present as part of an orderly succession strategy. Our age range is on the 'old' side, but not without energy!

Actually Donnington is not short of people to help; the Hub and Foodbank on a Saturday morning draws in volunteers as well as 'customers', but converting that to 'church workers' is a challenge. And people will step forward to do the flowers and the linen but taking on the big jobs is not on their agenda. That is why it is seen as a top challenge (see section 6)

### The buildings.

There are 3 buildings in the parish:-

**St George's Church** is in 'Old' Donnington and set back between fields and behind a stand of trees. It is of very lovely Saxon heritage and has been cared for and kept in great shape. In recent years we have undertaken major works and improvements including a new extension with committee room, our first ever toilets, new lighting throughout and a new audio system. This was all sympathetically done; indeed we won the Sussex Heritage Trust Award for Ecclesiastic-

al building in 2021. Our 2025 Quinquennial has been done and all recommendations will have been completed and paid for by April 2026.

**The Parish Hall** belongs to the church and is situated at the heart of the residential centre of the Parish. It is 1950s in origin but was extended with a new wing 5 years ago. We have solar panels installed and there are car parking spaces. The hall is used by local groups and clubs as well as by St George's for 2 or 3 church services per month and as the base for our Saturday morning Hub. .

**The Vicarage** is a big 4 bedroom/2 bathroom detached family house on Graydon Avenue that has been well looked after. It backs onto open fields with a marvellous back garden. It is very much part of a lovely local community that shares and cares. A quiet study for contemplation makes it a perfect place to prepare sermons! The PCC has set aside a good chunk of money to help a priest move into what will be his or her or their home.

### **Our Finances.**

We have £108,000 in the bank and generated a £6000 surplus in 2025. None of which is endowed and most of it is designated; an incoming priest is not inheriting a financial headache. The bulk of our income comes via rental income from hall lettings and PGS giving. We run a reserves policy of 6 months on both the church and hall funds and have projected building works held in reserve as well. The 2025 accounts can be viewed on our website.



The vicarage at 34 Graydon Avenue

### **Communications**

We use A Church Near You website which we keep up to date. We issue an occasional enewsletter (twice a month) and a facebook page. We can produce Donnington+Connected leaflets and get those into homes (16 editions delivered in the past 4 years)

## **6. Our challenges**

This is a positive picture; but we like to think it is pretty accurate. We are not blind to the challenges we face (just as all churches do) but if there was one other positive for St George's it is that we do tend to lean into problems and not ignore them. So, in that spirit, here are the big ones for an incoming priest;

1. Drawing in volunteers for the heavier duties (and we have some names that an incoming priest could well approach!). We are fortunate of having a good supportive cast of people for the no less important tasks such as sides-people, flowers, cleaning, linens, intercessors etc.
2. Financially St George's is not a burning platform and our financial position is no cause for immediate alarm. But the regular income is not matching inflation and the profile of the most generous givers is getting older. Fortunately our hall income is good and we will need to continue to be business savvy in this area to maximise the return the hall can provide.
3. But most importantly we need to keep the balance right between the practical ways of engaging with the community we serve and keeping our minds and hearts open to why we are doing this. In short the daily challenge of rediscovering God's mission for us here on earth as well as what St Francis advised and doing so with a smile on our faces.