

The Parishes

The Parish of Kempford with Whelford

Kempford and Whelford are separate villages with a single PCC

Kempford



Kempford is the largest of the five parishes and lies between Lechlade and Fairford on the River Thames. It comprises about 395 properties with additional 22 homes in the hamlet of Dunfield. Moved up The population is around 850 with a mix of families; some who have lived here for several generations, and newer residents attracted by recent housing development. Housing comprises privately owned, social and private rents.

St Mary's, a Grade 1 listed Church was begun in Norman times; extended in the 16th century; with stained glass windows and roof work completed in 19th century. In recent years, a grant was obtained for restoration work to the heraldry of the ceiling below the bell tower. Plans to improve facilities including accessible toilet and kitchenette, are awaiting final DAC approval.

It is an active, friendly village community with good village facilities: church, primary school, very popular pub (with excellent food and great support for the church and school) and a busy village hall.

Kempford C.E. Primary, judged 'good' by Ofsted, includes a thriving pre-school. Our 'Open the Book' team act out weekly Bible stories with the children "The children really enjoyed the Daniel story, identifying many of our school values and were keen to participate." A 'Prayer Spaces' team work with school leaders to run a reflective 'Prayer Spaces' Day at least once a year, giving children the opportunity explore, reflect and share their thoughts around a chosen theme. (Further details in the Appendix and one the website <https://www.kempfordschool.com>)



The Kempford Village Hall committee work hard to offer a range of popular regular and seasonal community events and clubs, as well as community services e.g. a weekly Post Office and monthly Community Café. A recent addition is the Community Garden Group, with the garden providing food, 'Grow your Own' plots, relaxation and active play space for the Youth Club.

Our Active Village Church

Our monthly Family Service is a wonderful opportunity for village families, children and members of the church to come together. We have a Family Service WhatsApp group that is used to share information ahead of the service and



photos for the Family Service board afterwards. We even held a joyful, outdoor baptism last year arising from our Family Service group, with siblings helping.

The use of St Mary's extends beyond regular church services and occasional offices. It has been a venue for community events and funding raising events, including a Concert for Ukraine, rock and country concerts, jazz and musicals evenings and an annual Christmas Soiree evening, all organised and manned by the community and church members working together. Christmas 2024 saw our first Christmas Tree Trail, created with villagers and beyond, celebrating community groups within Kempford and Whelford, and many of those who support our community

Our fundraising at St Mary's is for an accessible toilet and improved, energy efficient heating, lighting and kitchenette to better serve our community and those who attend services and celebrations. At the time of writing, we are awaiting final review and approval of our proposal by the DAC. Autumn 2025 events planned by the PCC include a Live Music Night, a 'Gifts & More' Fair, the second Community Christmas Tree Trail, and Christmas Hampers Raffle. Funds raised will go towards our two priorities: the work of the church in the community and the refurbishment.

We are fortunate to have a loyal and dedicated group of bell ringers, who recently initiated a very successful Open Church event which included visits up to the Bell Tower. Whilst we have welcomed new choristers over the current year, overall numbers have reduced significantly, reflecting the loss of our older members. The handful remaining are under the direction of a very talented musician, who wrote our music for the Agnus Dei amongst others. Bishop Rachel made her a member of the Order of Saint Kynebirga in 2021, in recognition of her very long service to the Diocese. For normal services our choir no longer robe and sit in pews adjacent to the piano.

We have one Church Warden who manages the care of both buildings etc. with the support of two honorary church wardens for Whelford and of course the joint PCC.

We benefit greatly from members of the village who contribute in many ways to the life of the church: helping with children and youth work as above, pastoral support for sick, lonely and elderly, florists, church cleaners, seasonal churchyard tidying, clock winding and maintenance, and flag flying.

Whelford



There are around 72 homes in Whelford and the hamlet of Dudgrove, served by the Grade 2 listed St Anne's Chapel of Ease, Whelford.

Last year, we repaired the beautiful entrance porch, which is a focal point at many weddings.

Whelford Village Hall is a thriving centre for the community. It has a licensed social club that is a popular base for active local groups and community events such as Beetle Drives, Quiz nights, Christmas plays and celebrations etc. Whelford Women meet once a month on a Thursday and have



completed several amazing projects such as Remembrance decorations and 'the Ark of Care' (two nearly identical pieces of textile art in response to Covid showing the support villagers provided to each other during this time). One is on display in Whelford church and the other in Kempsford church.

Working Together

You will find that Kempsford and Whelford PCC, Kempsford C.E. Primary, the Village Hall Committee, The George pub and the Parish Council strive to support each other for village events and each other's separate activities for the village community. The Parish Council are regularly involved, facilitating, and supporting events which draw the village together.

Spreading the news

Information on village activities and events is listed on the village notice boards, in Kempsford & Whelford Parish Newsletter, on the Facebook pages for the villages and, in Whelford, on the village WhatsApp group. The village also has its own web site at <http://www.kempsford.net> .

Finances

St Mary's Kempsford together with St Anne's Whelford have some financial reserves. Contributions are managed through the Parish Giving Scheme, though there is work to do increasing regular giving and meeting the Parish Share. We benefit from two Charitable Trusts, to support the relief of poverty in our villages and one, The Viscount Weymouth Trust, to support the education of children at Kempsford C.E. Primary.

The Parish of Meysey Hampton with Marston Meysey

The Meyseys are a single parish with one PCC and two churches with separate identities, which work co-operatively together.

Meysey Hampton



The population of Marston Meysey is around 570. The church of St Mary the Virgin lies on the Western edge of the village; however it is near the school and the village hall and a short walk from the excellent and popular village pub, The Mason's Arms. There is a cricket pitch with a pavilion nearby, which is regularly used for community events throughout the year and has a good play area for children. There is also a village green which, again, is the location for a variety of events which bring the village together, though these are reducing in frequency due to a lack of support.

This is because the demographics of the village have changed over recent years. Previously Meysey Hampton was very much a rural village, with a number of farmers who were strong supporters of the village and the church, but their numbers have declined. Meanwhile there has been influx of working families, along with a mobile home park. We have lost some of the community spirit that existed, and the much-loved Mothers Union and Women's Institute have gone.

The church building is in very good condition and there is a good peel of bells which visiting bell ringers like to use. In recent years, a new heating system, loo and kitchenette were installed, which means that the church can now be used for a wider range of events and recently we held a 'Long Table' type Harvest Lunch, which was well supported.

The church is open every day thanks to our small group of helpers. The length of the previous vacancy, along with Covid, had a marked effect on our regular congregation and we lost some people to other churches, so our attendance at regular services is around 6-10. That said, there is still a fondness for the church in the village; festivals and special services are generally well supported; and our fundraising events receive widespread support.



The CofE Primary school, which was named as the 'Best Primary School in Gloucestershire' in 2024, has increasingly strong links with the church, holding Collective Worship in church at least once a month. For special services, when parents are invited, the church is packed, and we have had the school children take an active part in some other services. Sadly, there are relatively few children from the village itself at the school, which most coming from the surrounding area. In talking to the children about the parish profile and what they would like to see, they really engaged with the conversation and came up with some good ideas which we are keen to try: events in church including a book swap and art exhibition, a 'Reflection Garden' in the churchyard and singing in church. When asked what qualities they would like in the new vicar their answers were 'kind, helpful and to be thankful'.

We are keen to embrace change to restore our congregations so that St Mary's can once again take its rightful place at heart of the village.



Marston Meysey

Nestled in the beautiful South Cotswolds, Marston Meysey is a welcoming and close-knit village with a population of around 120. Known for its vibrant community spirit, it reunited with the larger parish of Meysey Hampton in 2008, having been a separate parish since 1648.

Marston Meysey, the most northerly village in Wiltshire, is a typical small Cotswold village of 78 dwellings, most of which are grouped together either side of the village street and are owner occupied. The village itself is lively and well-connected with the Old Spotted Cow pub and the Village Hall regularly hosting community events like summer BBQs, film nights, and plant sales which bring the village together and benefit the church.

Remembrance Sunday - Laying the wreath at one of our 2 Commonwealth War Graves



The

population includes a number of young families, most with parents working away from village. Living in Wiltshire, the children attend state schools in Highworth (Bristol diocese) and a few have places at the C of E primary in Meysey Hampton, South Cerney and Fairford. Some of the older children attend private schools or Farmors secondary school in Fairford.

St. James's Church, which is open every day, sits in the centre of the village and is a Grade 2 listed building dating from 1875. This small but well-built church of Cotswold stone is surrounded by a walled graveyard and features stunning 19th-century-stained glass. Whilst regular service attendance is very low, we draw much larger numbers for seasonal and special services such as a 'Songs of Praise' and a Peace Vigil for the Middle East and often the village dogs come too! Events like Christmas Eve's 8 Lessons and Carols, fills the church with villagers of all beliefs and none, and is an annual highlight.

There is much goodwill for the church which is lovingly maintained by the village and supported financially through planned giving and volunteers are always on hand to organise, clean, or decorate the church for whatever is needed.

Marston Meysey is more than a picturesque village—it's a community where neighbours care for one another and come together to celebrate and support. The village is home to young families, retirees, and professionals, many of whom commute to work. While we are a mostly prosperous community, we value the presence of a vicar who can foster connections, provide pastoral care, and guide us in sustaining St. James's role in our village life.



CHURCH WARDEN – CAMILLA FLACH

The Parish of Castle Eaton



The parish comes within the boundaries of the Borough of Swindon which is a unitary authority. There are some 98 dwellings within the village and about 12 in surrounding area as well as two working farms, making up a total community of about 250 people. People of working age commute to work or work from home and there is a very active retired community who pursue various activities and support village societies.

There is a great sense of community in the village with a busy event calendar in the Village Hall, including the annual Village Fete and Christmas Fair along with many others. There is a weekly coffee morning that coincides with the mobile Post Office that comes each Thursday, as well as regular film nights and many other events and club use.

Our beautiful Grade 1 listed 12th Century Church of St Mary the Virgin stands in a prominent position on the raised banks of the River Thames, some 15 miles from its source. We have a rota of people who ensure the Church is open to all daily from April to October and at weekends during the winter months. It attracts many visitors who are walking the Thames path, as well as people with family connections to the area.

The Church was re-roofed in recent years, a new heating system was installed in the summer of 2024 and the building is in good repair all-round. The Church yard is maintained by a rota of residents (church and non-church goes alike) and is kept at a very good standard. We have a very keen and active group of bell ringers in the Church and work has been done recently on the bells and fixtures and there is a well-stocked book swap area in Church which brings people into the Church and there is scope to expand this.

Priority in Castle Eaton is given to providing a relaxed and friendly environment in Church which is welcoming to everyone. Our regular congregation usually numbers 12 to 15 with increased

attendance for special services and seasonal favourites. Musically, along with the beautiful pipe organ, we have a Yamaha piano and a computer system which has a range of hymns and songs with videos of the words.

Sadly, no children attend Church regularly though seasonal specials do attract them (probably because chocolate is involved!) so work is needed to reach them. (We understand that the local authority has plans to build more houses in the village, which will hopefully bring more families to the village.) That said, the larger village is strongly supportive of the Church and always support the various social events we host.

Church Wardens



CHARLES BYAM-COOK



BARRY WICKS

Engagement with Children and Youth in Kempford & Whelford Communities

As you will be a Governor of Kempford School, here is a little more information on our involvement there and feedback towards this profile.

Prayerspaces 2025 theme was Teamwork. Children from other primary schools in the local cluster joined activities throughout the day, giving 150 children the chance to explore and reflect on Teamwork in a fun way.

Feedback included : 'We had a brilliant day at Kempford Prayerspaces.' (Visiting Headteacher) 'Together, we focused on building strong friendships and collaborating with each other in meaningful ways. It was a wonderful day filled with learning, laughter and new connections.' (Kempford Headteacher). Feedback from the children themselves was extensive and included : being kind; respecting; care for others; listen well; courteous; encouraging; sharing; being selfless; help each other; persevere together; trust and encourage; have courage to speak up and try something.

School and church community combined - The Long Table

The school enabled members of the church community to run a village Long Table meal throughout the Autumn and Winter 2022/23 and 23/24, using their hall and kitchen. Members of our church, with support from external experts and villagers, provided a two-course meal for all ages, meeting social and financial needs in our communities.

