

Church of St Lawrence, Lackford.

Annual Report

(including Churchwarden's & Churchyard Reports)

2025 was yet another unremarkable year for Lackford St Lawrence Church. The same few people attended the services whilst the majority of the Lackford community stayed away and despite renewed appeals for help with upkeep, there was no response. Those who attended the services enjoyed the ministrations a several different members of the clergy and were sad to say goodbye to Rev. Jenny on her retirement at the end of the year.

The Wonder Club has been attended by a decreasing number of Lackford families as their children grow older. Fortunately, a number of families from outside Lackford, but from within the Lark Valley benefice, support it and attend regularly despite there being an all-age service on the same day elsewhere in the Lark Valley. Sadly, none of the families who attend the Wonder Club come to the regular Sunday morning Eucharist services in Lackford.

Easter Day 2025 fell on the 3rd Sunday of April so there was no service at Lackford. The Compline service at Lackford during Holy Week was well supported, mainly by people from other parishes in the LVNB team. There was no Pets' Service at Lackford again this year. The Wonder Club Harvest celebration with a bring-and-share tea was not as well supported this year, possibly due to other churches in the benefice holding similar services at this time. With the church decorated for Christmas, Christingles were made as part of the delayed December Wonder Club service which was reasonably well attended.

There was one wedding at Lackford Church during the year, on June 21st involving a couple living in Lackford; also, one baptism on November 2nd, of the daughter of a family who have lived in Lackford for several years. The interment of ashes of Colin Smith, a long-time resident of Lackford who was a dedicated supporter of Lackford church and the village community as a whole, and whose inspiration the meeting room, kitchenette and toilet were, took place on a very wet and windy day in November.

The Suffolk Historic Churches Ride and Stride event took place in September and once again we were visited by a number of cyclists, making it worthwhile.

The Church building itself is looked after by the small team of village residents who are regular attendees at services; for the wedding in June the interior was given a thorough cleaning over a period of 3 days but there has been no maintenance work carried out on the building itself during the year due to a shortage of funds. The leaning boundary wall is an ongoing cause for concern and grant application forms are being completed by the Treasurer to fund remedial work. The mice continue to play havoc with the organ by leaving droppings inside which cause the keys to 'stick', necessitating a visit from the organ repair specialist on each occasion.

The Churchyard has once again been adopted by the Community Payback Team, which is a great relief for the churchwardens. Lackford residents and visitors to the area frequently enjoy, and comment on, the peace and tranquillity of this well-ordered space, despite the rabbits' continued excavations in and around the graves, thwarting the CPT efforts to fill in the holes. Sadly, it is not feasible to leave the unattended church open due to its remote location, following acts of vandalism, abuse, littering and damage. The mapping of the Churchyard is an ongoing project which is nearing completion.

A church-going member of the Lackford community has recently taken an interest in the churchyard from an ecological point of view and is working alongside Suffolk Wildlife Trust advisers towards achieving an Eco Award for the church; as part of the RSPB Big British Birdwatch in late January, an event was held in the churchyard at which about 15 people from the Lark Valley Benefice met to spot and identify the birds there – an event which will count towards achieving this award.

The Church building was well used for community events during 2024; Lackford Community Council Annual Meeting was held in February, an Easter Egg Hunt in the churchyard on Easter Sunday, an Hedgehog afternoon with a speaker from Suffolk Hedgehog Rescue (with visiting hedgehog) in April, a talk on the River Lark's history and development, followed by cheese and wine in May and a community social event and Christmas mini market were held in December. Unfortunately, these events do not bring in any revenue for the church (they pay only for the utilities used), and this is an issue which needs to be addressed if the church in Lackford is to survive.

The quarterly Parish Council meetings are supported financially by the Parish Council, who also contribute to the upkeep of the churchyard.

The members of the PCC have complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 (duty to have regard to house of bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults) as required.

Harry Lidster (Churchwarden)

April 2026