

## The Church of St Mary and St Peter Lois Weedon

### The Parish and Villages

The Parish includes the villages of Lois Weedon and Weston and the hamlet of Plumpton. The Church, which dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, is at the centre of the Village on a prominent mound surrounded by a graveyard. The management of Lois Weedon Church is undertaken by a newly formed BRICC committee, chaired by the Churchwarden as described Benefice Profile. The hamlet of Plumpton has a Trust--owned redundant Church which is used for occasional services.



The villages are to the north of the Benefice 7 miles from Towcester to the East, 8 miles from Brackley to the South West and Banbury 10 miles to the West adjacent to the M40.

The villages like others in the Benefice are in a beautiful rural setting surrounded by farmland. The population is around 360 with 152 dwellings and community buildings. The average age (as at the 2011 Census) is in the mid 40s with approximately 2.3 occupants per household. There are families in the village who can trace their ancestry back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These have been joined over the last 40 years by young families seeking a rural village life. There are two landscaping businesses, a local Pub and several who run small businesses from their homes.

There is a broad mixture of old and new houses including Manor Houses and social housing. The renowned literary Sitwell family have lived at Weston Hall since the mid 1800s and Dame Edith Sitwell has a striking memorial stone in the graveyard with a fine bronze casting by Henry Moore. The Rectory is a 1980s stone 4 bedroomed well maintained house with a large garden in a quiet corner of Lois Weedon village Green.

There are many local groups and organisations (including the Church), details of which can be accessed via the village Website [www.westonandweedonloispc.org.uk](http://www.westonandweedonloispc.org.uk).

There is a Bi-Monthly Newsletter delivered to each household which is also accessible on the Website. Email copies are sent to ex residents and family members who have moved away.

There is a local CEVA Primary Academy (dating from 1860) with 80+ pupils, a modern Sports Hall and refurbished classrooms. St Loys school is classified as outstanding by OFSTED and The C of E/Methodist School Inspectors. The school has a weekly assembly taken by the Rector and also holds events in the church including plays, nativities, award assemblies and educational visits. The school holds fundraising events for the Church on an ad hoc basis.

The local Crown Pub is a 17<sup>th</sup> century coaching Inn and B & B, The Village Hall, built in the 1920s, hosts many events including the local Drama productions. The Weston Baptist Chapel was recently renovated adding the adjoining Weston Community Project function rooms and is a fine example of an early chapel.

Each year Weston hosts a May Day fair for 2000 visitors which raises money for local groups and organisations (including the Church) and an annual Food and Produce Show organised by the Horticultural Society, founded by a past local resident C H Middleton, the Wartime broadcaster who hosted the 'Dig for Victory' campaign on the BBC.

The Church is supported by a Charitable Trust 'Friends of Lois Weedon Church' which regularly helps financially with repairs and improvements to the fabric and environs of the Church. They hold separate fundraisers, e.g. Opera and Musical Evenings, Race nights. There are two other external Trusts that donate to the Church.

The Church tower provides an Access Point for local broadband supplied by Tove Valley Broadband, a community project supplying over 650 households in the Benefice and beyond. The Church provides access to approximately 80 users. The system was installed and is supported by local volunteers.

The Village Car Scheme provides transport for those unable to drive to hospital and doctor's appointments and emergency trips to shops and activities. The scheme is financed by donations from May Day and the Parish Council. The organisation and drivers are all volunteers.

Volunteers from the church participate in the weekly food run taking produce from the Mission in Wolverton to the Hope Centre in Northampton.

The Parish Council supports the Church by paying for grass cutting of the Church graveyard.

## Finance

In the recent past all parishes have struggled to meet the Parish share which prompted the changes in the Benefice organisation. Lois Weedon has two Bank Accounts, an Operational account and a Fabric account. To date these stand at £3,000 and £15,000 respectively. This year we spent £15,000 to complete our Quinquennial work and £5,000 on a roof alarm system. Both were mitigated by grants of £5,000 from the Friends of Lois Weedon Church. The Northamptonshire Historic Churches Trust provided £500 towards the Alarm. We in turn support the Ride and Stride fund raiser which the Trust organises. The next Quinquennial is due in 2019. We have been monitoring a significant crack between the tower and the Chancel which appears to have stabilised but will at some stage require attention. Although the finances are tight the new Benefice structure and a renewed vision for fundraising give us optimism for better days.

## Buildings



The Church stands on the site of a Saxon Temple. Close by was a Bailey Castle and during the early Norman era a Priory was established by Benedictine Monks. The church was built for the priory and the West Wall has a distinctive herringbone design typical of the period. The only other



Norman relic is the font which is in use to this day. During the middle ages the church was decorated with wall paintings remnants of which are still

visible. In the mid 1900;s the then Rector Samuel Smith, with the help of the owner of Weston Hall and several colleges, built a new north aisle as well as the school and a Curacy. His tomb is in the Churchyard and, as founder of the school, it is tended by the children.



The tower has a peal of 6 Bells which are rung by an enthusiastic group of Bellringers who practice regularly and ring before services and on celebrations, The clock chimes the quarter hour.



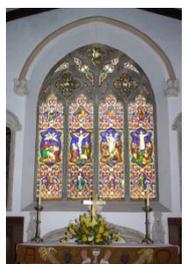
The Organ is a particularly fine small instrument . A single manual keyboard Casson Positive was installed in 1914 and rebuilt with the addition of pedal keyboard by Robert Shaftoe in 1990.

A sound system was installed in 2012 with 4 speakers mounted in the ceiling. This enables high quality sound for lapel, pulpit, lectern, organ and vocal mikes and other external sources eg a Computer, CD player and instruments, to be played through a studio mixer.



There are several fine stained glass windows commemorating past patrons and Vicars dating from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

As previously mentioned we are facing a challenge with the building, however we have carried out extensive repair to the fabric of the building particularly the stonework of the windows. All the guttering and drainage has been improved and we may not need the originally estimated £37,000



to remedy the crack. An Appeal Fund was formed under the Chairmanship of the late Sir John Greenaway which raised £37,000 in 2012 for the previous Quinquennial work and other essential repairs. We are currently preparing a Faculty for a Served and Toilet utilising an already installed water supply.