



DIOCESE
OF DURHAM



The HELM Group

The parishes of Ebchester, Leadgate, and
Medomsley

Group Profile 2026



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Introduction

Formed in 2020 and known as the HELM Group, the parishes of Ebchester, Leadgate, and Medomsley are a collection of 3 semi-rural parishes and 4 churches in the Derwent Valley on the outskirts of the town of Consett in northwest County Durham.

Come July 2026, on the retirement of the vicar in Benfieldside and Castleside, **we will be forming *The Benefice of Derwent Valley***, comprising the parish of Benfieldside, the parish of Castleside, the parish of Consett, the parish of Ebchester, the parish of Leadgate and the parish of Medomsley, which parishes shall continue distinct, with three stipends allocated to the team.

The Derwent Valley Team Ministry is part of the newly formed Lanchester Deanery plan. The deanery thought long and hard about the needs of the area and took some significant decisions so that the churches could best serve their people.

This team ministry covers Consett and the surrounding villages, incorporating the western half of the deanery. **It will comprise of a Team Rector and two Team Vicars**. The pastoral scheme has deliberately been left open so that those **coming into these new posts can decide how best to encourage mission and growth across the area**.

For example, whilst it would be possible for the clergy to decide to split the patch up on geographical lines, it may be a more creative solution to think about working collaboratively across the whole area, giving different people responsibility for different aspects of mission and ministry.

We are praying that this will be the best way to see healthy and flourishing in the benefice.

Until then, we will continue to serve the Lord and our communities in the HELM Group.

There is a real desire in our churches to grow. We would love to see our churches growing in depth, in breadth, and growing younger as we seek to engage with children and young people in our communities. Each of our churches are hoping to strengthen our schools' work, and become a visible, active presence in our communities.

We are seeking an energetic and approachable priest-in-charge who can help us in the work of reaching out to old and new, strengthening the faith of long-serving disciples and kindling the flame of faith in those who have yet to meet Jesus Christ.



The Person We Seek

We are looking for an energetic and approachable priest-in-charge who:

- Has a missional and pastoral heart
- Is keen to be out and about in our villages and caring for the housebound
- Can help us to build relationships and engage with children, youth, and young people, including schools and local families
- Is friendly and has a good sense of humour
- Relates well with people from a variety of backgrounds
- Is innovative and open to new ideas
- Has a desire to see our churches grow
- Is collaborative and will equip lay leaders to flourish
- Can help us reorder our buildings for future mission opportunities



The Parishes

The Parish of Ebchester

Population: approximately 2000

IMD Rank: 3588/12,178

Our clear hope is to show God's love in our local communities, by example, care and teaching, summarised as in 1 John: To love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

Worship, Mission, and Community

Situated a few miles north of Consett, the parish of Ebchester covers the villages of Ebchester, Low Westwood, and Hamsterley. We are a two church parish, home to St Ebba's Ebchester, and Christ Church Hamsterley. Our eucharistic Sunday services alternate between the two church buildings, usually with a congregation of around 21.

We seek to be empowered to build relationships with people in our community unknown to us, creating friendship and fellowship with our local community.

To combat a lack of provision in Hamsterley, we set up a **weekly Toddler Group**, which has been much valued and **recently celebrated its 10th birthday**. Its sessions are friendly and joyful, with a nod to its Christian roots.

We have **excellent links with [Ebchester CE Primary School](#)**. The whole school attends fortnightly **Open the Book** sessions in St Ebba's Church, and our **Messy Church** meets in the school hall every month. One churchwarden is a foundation governor and it is hoped that a new incumbent would take up the second foundation governor role. We run a monthly **Sunday School**, currently with 2 children, one of whom was confirmed last year, much to our delight!

As well as we are able, we **befriend and support** both the lonely elderly, and young parents and carers who may be feeling isolated. We reach out through **monthly coffee mornings, and annual and one-off events** (eg. Consett Brass Band carol concerts, Stations of the Cross Art Exhibition, Pilgrimage, Songs of Praise, Jubilee and VE Day celebrations).



Afternoon teain Ebchester Community Centre

We do what we can to help alleviate poverty, working alongside foodbanks, having collections for the Peoples' Kitchen Appeal, and running our own soup and social mornings as a warm space. Further afield, we are regular supporters of Children's Society, Lazarus Home in Bethany, and Children in Need.

Assets and People

Our two churches are covered by one PCC. We've had this arrangement for around 50 years and **work very well together**. This spirit of collaboration has helped us adapt to working within the new HELM group. Our PCC has representatives from both churches, with one churchwardens, two deanery synod representatives, a treasurer, secretary and safeguarding officer. Our safeguarding dashboard is 86% complete at Level 3.

We have two church buildings. St Ebba's, Ebchester which is Grade 2* listed and Christ Church, Hamsterley which is unlisted but in a conservation area. Both our buildings are in a generally sound condition. We are currently working with our architect, and plans for St Ebba's re-ordering will soon be submitted for DAC approval. We hope this provides a more usable space and will help us deepen the relationships we have formed with our community.

For a **360° tour of St Ebba's**, please [click here](#).

Historically, the parish has always paid its parish share in full, and we continued to increase our annual share in line with the Diocese's recommendations until our unrestricted reserves ran out. Since then, we have been paying £9000 towards our parish share. Our annual income is around £20k-25k and our annual spend is around £22k-30k (though this figure slightly increases when there is building work required).

We are constantly seeking to raise income and in the last year have joined the Easyfundraising group, and purchased a card reader which has been especially useful at baptisms, weddings and funerals



The Future

Looking to the future, we are hoping to strengthen our schools' work, restart home communions for the housebound, and become a church with a visible, active presence in our communities.

We have successfully collaborated with the other HELM parishes, to amicably maintain service patterns, organist and clergy cover; and to share expertise across PCCs, for instance in Buildings or Health and Safety advice, despite the lack of an ordained clergy link for 3 years. We look forward to the flexibility of the Derwent Valley Team Ministry will provide, and the way it may help us continue to share good practice, and to further develop our response to the four diocesan priorities.

The Parish Setting

The parish is nestled on the banks of the River Derwent, and with its beautiful countryside, surrounding woodland, and country park, **it is a fantastic place for walking** - with some spectacular views to be found.

The parish has a range of amenities, with two care homes, a pub, two community centres, a GP surgery, luxury country lodges, a very friendly and well-stocked village store, and boasts an excellent Mediterranean restaurant.

This is a wonderful part of the world, with a loving community feel - we would love to welcome you into the worshipping life of our churches as you consider making your home here..



Celebrating a younger member's First Communion with tea and cake, after Eucharist in Christ Church



Christ Church, Hamsterley



Christ Church Toddler Group enjoying a Forest School Session at Ebchester School

The Parish of St Ives' Leadgate

Population: approximately 4,400

IMD Rank: 1356/12,178

Our vision is to be 'A witness to the past. A beacon for the future'.

Worship, Mission, and Community

We worship in the liberal catholic/middle-of-road tradition, centred around the Eucharist.

We share our Sunday eucharist with Medomsley, alternating services between our two churches. We typically see around 23 worshipping with us Sunday by Sunday. Since 2022 we have **a midweek spoken mass** that takes place in the intimate setting of our Lady Chapel, **which has seen a new congregation form**. On occasion, we also have Evensong - occasional services like these seem to attract a larger congregation.

We try to be a missionally active church, participating in community life and helping our congregation in their faith.

We host regular events in the parish, including art exhibitions, heritage events, socials, and music nights. We host regular coffee mornings alongside the Methodist Church to **help build friendship and tackle loneliness in our community**. Alongside these regular events, **we have an exciting seasonal calendar**, running a range of well-loved fayres in the summer, during Harvest, and at Christmas.

During seasonal times **we aim to reach out with the love of Christ**, hosting a great **Beer & Carols** event at Leadgate Club, as well as Holy Week, Easter, and Christmas services. On Sundays during Lent, we also lean into our **Catholic spirituality**, with Rosary & Compline services.

We work in conjunction with 2 local primary schools around the seasons, hosting visits from them and teaching them about our church. We have a good partnership with the local Roman Catholic school and they have their monthly Mass in our beautiful building.



The LiT group is a steering meeting whose function is to manage the Heritage Lottery Project. St Ives earlier efforts (via an independent project manager) to secure National Heritage Lottery funding failed (twice) due to lack of community engagement and local steering. After the second failure St Ives decided to set its own group up- LiT with local strategic people who had an interest in the local community to gauge what the community of Leadgate required of St.Ives.

Challenging poverty is another element of our church life. We give to the Children's Society at Christmas, support our local Food Bank with produce and with donations. The Just Love project is an independent local charity set up by a local resident and supplies toiletries and hygiene products to the local area free of charge. At St Ives we hope that if our plans to become 'more than a church' come to fruition we can work in partnership with this local charity and further develop our mission and community engagement.

Assets and People

We have a PCC of 6, in addition to our parish safeguarding officer. Our PCC has 2 churchwardens, one treasurer, and a secretary. Some of our PCC members are very long serving, with a few new faces too. One of our churchwardens leads communion by extension and the other leads us in the prayers of the daily office.

Our average annual expenditure fluctuates around the £20,000 mark and our income (on the most part) tends to match this sum. This year will be a slightly more expensive one for us as we are currently undertaking a 3 phase plan to stabilise the east end of the building, with the first phase completed just before Christmas. This year we are paying £10,000 towards our parish share which we have increased in recent years to bring it closer to the Diocese's Guided Pledge

Our church building is a Grade II listed stone building built in the 1860s. Aside from the stabilisation project, we undertake maintenance as our finances allow.

The Future

As we share services, we work very well with Medomsley and see them as our "sister" church, sharing lay ministries and resources with one another. We are flexible and would welcome changing structures that would make the best use of resources, for example we would be willing to explore merging PCCs with Medomsley to simplify governance.

There is real need in our community and **we want to be a church fit for the 21st century**. We want to celebrate our heritage and be a beacon of hope for generations to come. We earnestly desire for St Ives to be a community hub for heritage, culture, and arts, as well as a place of worship and welcome. Currently do very little for children and young people in the church and this is an area of mission we would love to grow in. We hope connection with the wider Derwent Valley Team ministry will contribute to this significantly.



The Parish Setting

Situated on the outskirts of Consett, **the semi-rural parish** of St Ives Leadgate has the **joys of village life**, the accessibility and **provision of a town**, with **beautiful rolling countryside** as well.

There are two primary schools in our parish. Our Lady and St Joseph Brooms Catholic School is connected with the RC church (of the same name). The other school in the parish is a state infant and junior school.

There are a range of local shops and being on the outskirts of Consett greatly increases the services available nearby. The parish itself has coffee shops, a stunningly refurbished theatre, a boxing club, in addition to the vets, GP and a business park.. There is also one care home in the parish.

Our parish is one that experiences deprivation both in terms of material and relational poverty. Over a quarter of children in the parish live in poverty, as do around 20% of pensioners and working age people.



ST. IVES CHURCH
LEADGATE

Holy Communion

Sunday 9.00am
Wednesday 10.00am

Baptisms, Marriages, Funerals, Confessions,
Healing Ministry, Burial of Ashes

For further Enquires, please contact
The Reverend John Fisher

Choral Evensong
Wednesday 7.30pm

The Parish of St Mary Magdalene Medomsley

Population: approximately 2120

IMD Rank: 5434/12,178

'Seeing God in All

We are called by God to build relationships with all people in our community, creating a web of friendship and fellowship.

Worship, Mission, and Community

Alternating with our friends in Leadgate, we **worship** in our church on **Sundays at 9am, centred around the Eucharist**. We **value the lay involvement** in our worship, with those who read lessons, sides people, and people licenses to administer the chalice. We tend to see around 26 people joining us to worship on Sundays. At our services, we have a small (but thriving) **Sunday school** and have occasional **Family Services**. In warmer months, we have a **weekly Celtic worship** service which is currently-lay led.

St Mary Magdalene was one of the **first churches in Durham Diocese** to complete the **Partnership in Missional Church** programme, with the aim reaching out to the wider Medomsley community in fellowship and friendship. We firmly believe that **what we do provides vital services** for people living in poverty and isolation in community.

We work closely with local schools, who **identify families struggling to cope** during the cost of living crisis. With the help of grant funding and dedicated volunteers, those referred to our initiative are offered **food vouchers** for local supermarkets. We have also been able to **help people with the cost of heating bills** and in some cases, **white goods** such as cookers and fridges. Since beginning this work, **we have blessed over 120 young families** in this way.

We offer tea, coffee and soup at our popular **Warm Welcome Tuesdays**, and host a monthly **Saturday Coffee Morning**. We find that these spaces appeal particularly to older people who may live alone and are **looking for fellowship and conversation**. We know that community connection can be lost when we cannot meet other people and we felt this type of provision in the village was needed.

We've been able to do this with the installation of an **AA* grade boiler system** in our meeting room and kitchen, made possible by funding from Northumbria Historic Churches Trust, and a 2nd AA* boiler in the vestry funded by a private donation.



We also host a **Craft and Chat** on Tuesday mornings, an **Art Club** on Friday, and a **Saturday Games Club** - all aimed at **addressing the problem of isolation in our village**. We also do food collections at our Harvest Festival for Consett Food Bank.

The Occasional Offices are a pretty apt description for Occasional Offices at our church. We see 3-4 baptisms, 4-5 funerals, and around 1 wedding per year. Baptisms have been slightly trickier to arrange with a high level of vacancies in the Deanery and limited retired clergy availability.

Aside from Sunday school and Family Service, **we have good links with Bishop Ian Ramsey CofE Primary School**, who host their Easter, Harvest, and Christmas services in the church. The services are led by the children and usually the whole school is present. The services are well attended by parents, grandparents and carers and there is a very vibrant atmosphere. **We are very fortunate to have this link** with the school and would love to build on it further. Beyond this, we are aware that our links with the younger demographic could be improved - this is something **we would love input, energy,** and direction on.

Assets and People

We are blessed with some great people in our church. **We have a committed PCC team** with a wide-ranging skillset, four lay leaders trained in the Diocese's Wings for Worship programme, and have **an experienced Sunday School Lead**. There is an excellent mix of clergy/lay-led services and we love being involved making worship in our church a whole church endeavour.

Our parish share this year is £12491. Over the past three years **we have paid the entire parish share** suggested by the Diocese and will be doing so again this year. Including grant funding, our annual income tends to be around £20k-33k, with our annual spend ranging from £20k-26k. We also have legacies equating to £55k.



St Mary Magdalene, Medomsley is our Grade I listed building which was founded in the mid-12th century, and is described in the history books as **'an early English gem'**. The nave was largely rebuilt in 1878 and the Lady Chapel added at this time. In 2003 the church was reordered to form a small meeting room, kitchen facilities and toilet with disabled access. There is an independent heating system to the kitchen/meeting room which is well used. There is a church garden at the front of the church, open to the public. The churchyard is 'closed' except for reserved double graves and maintained by the local authority.

A major project to replace the nave floor, repair external drainage, and minor re-ordering to remove five rear pews and more flexible space was given faculty permission late 2024 and we are currently seeking tenders and the final tranche of funding so we can commence the major repair project very soon. The architect will oversee the project.



The Parish Setting

Medomsley is a village about two miles northeast of the centre of Consett, lying around 240m above sea level atop a hill overlooking the Derwent Valley. On clear days, there are **stunning views of the Pennines** and the surrounding countryside for miles around.

There is one primary school in Medomsley; Bishop Ian Ramsey Church of England Primary School is a member of the Durham & Newcastle Diocesan Learning Trust. The school with 109 pupils was rated 'Good' by OFSTED in April 2024 and was described by a recent, positive, SIAMS report as a place where "The Christian vision and values create a loving and nurturing culture where pupils and adults feel safe, valued and able to shine."

Within the village, there is a general dealer/newsagent, and a mobile Post Office is available for one hour on each Thursday just outside church. There is one pub, and retirement housing directly opposite the church. There are no other care homes in the local area.

Lanchester Deanery has the only Immigration Removal Centre in the Diocese which is located on the outskirts of Medomsley. There are regular demonstrations outside of the centre which is run by a contractor. There is currently very little interaction between the centre and our church representatives though there is a chaplain in situ as well as visits from clergy/other denominations.



Sunday Service Pattern Across the Group

1st Sunday	<p>Medomsley 9am Eucharist</p> <p>Hamsterley 11am Eucharist</p>
2nd Sunday	<p>Leadgate 9am Eucharist</p> <p>Ebchester 11am Eucharist</p>
3rd Sunday	<p>Medomsley 9am Eucharist</p> <p>Hamsterley 11am Eucharist</p>
4th Sunday	<p>Leadgate 9am Eucharist</p> <p>Ebchester 11am Eucharist</p>
5th Sunday	<p>Rotating location 10am HELM Joint Service</p>

Housing

Ebchester - Parsonage House

The New Rectory in Ebchester was purpose built in 1974.

It is a 4 bedroom, detached house built adjacent to St Ebba's Church and Churchyard, nestled between the community centre and Ebchester CofE Primary School.

It has full central heating, double-glazed plastic windows, complete with a downstairs study and WC, and a decent sized garage.



Leadgate Vicarage

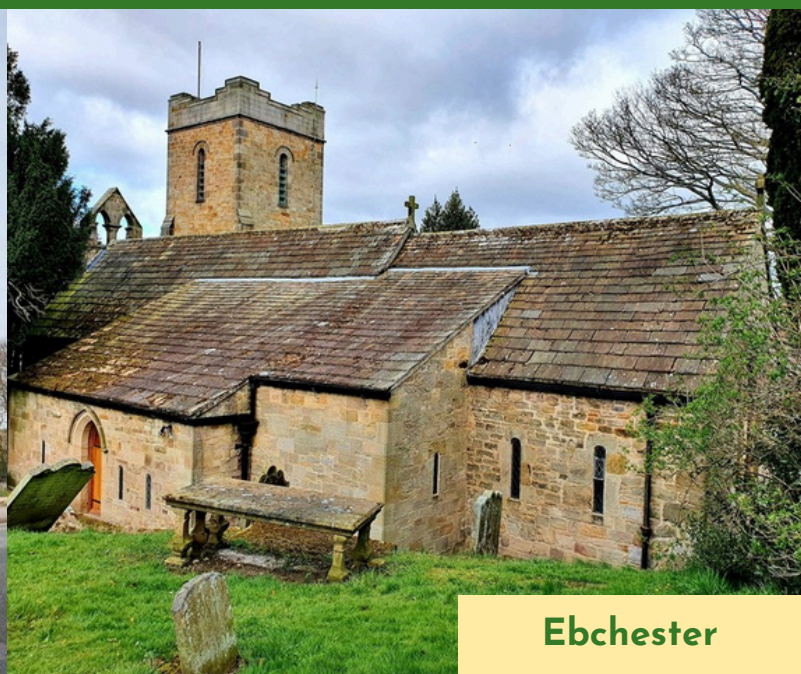
The vicarage in Leadgate is a 4 bedroom detached house on the edge of Leadgate village. The house is in a good location, being a 200 yard walk from St Ives' church and in walking distance of the village, its schools and amenities. The vicarage has recently had a new boiler fitted, a full internal redecoration, and several new carpets fitted.

For detailed floorplans of the properties, please see Appendix 1.

We are praying for you as you discern whether the Lord is calling you to this beautiful part of the world!



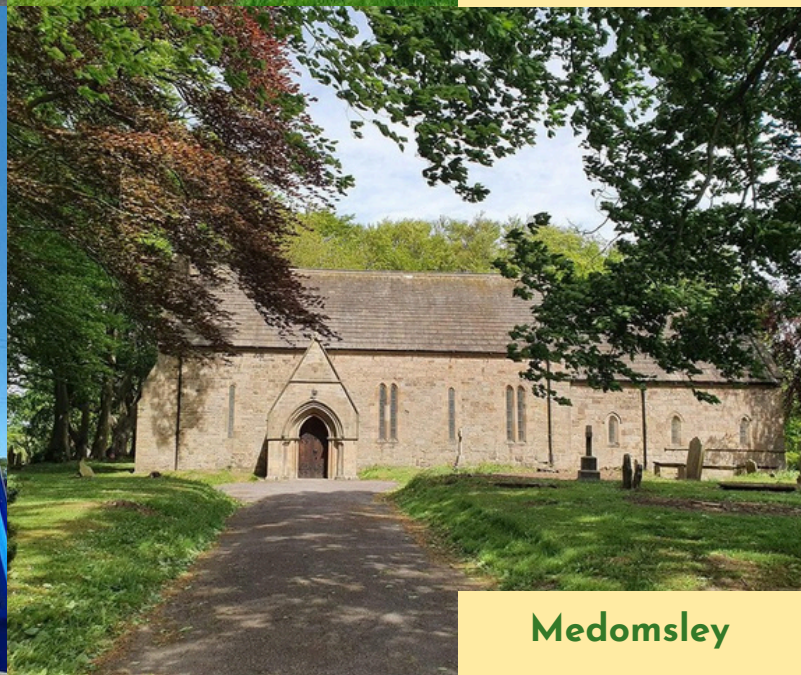
Hamsterley



Ebchester



Leadgate



Medomsley

Details

To enquire about this post, please get in contact with



The Ven. Libby Wilkinson

Archdeacon of Durham

archdeacon.of.durham@durham.anglican.org

Hamsterley



Leadgate



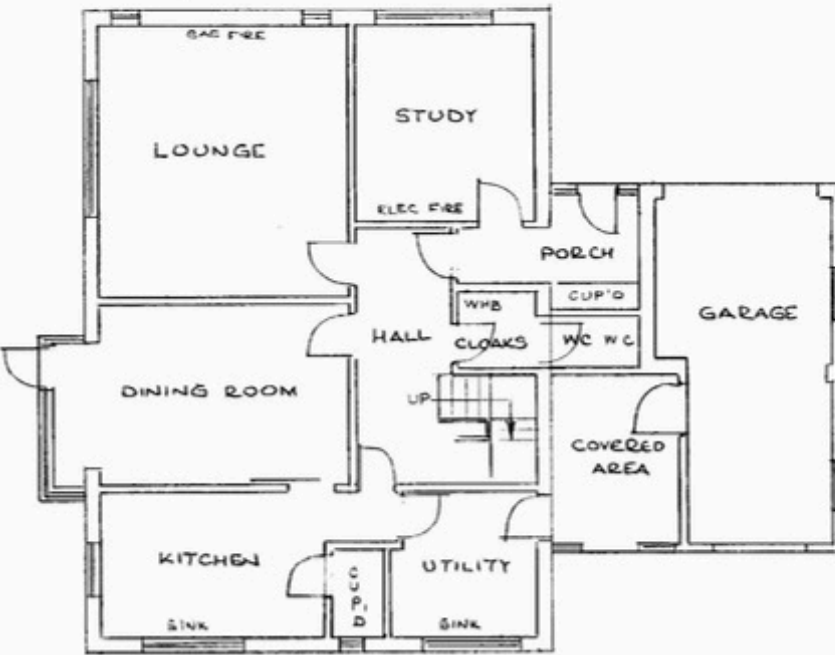
Ebchester



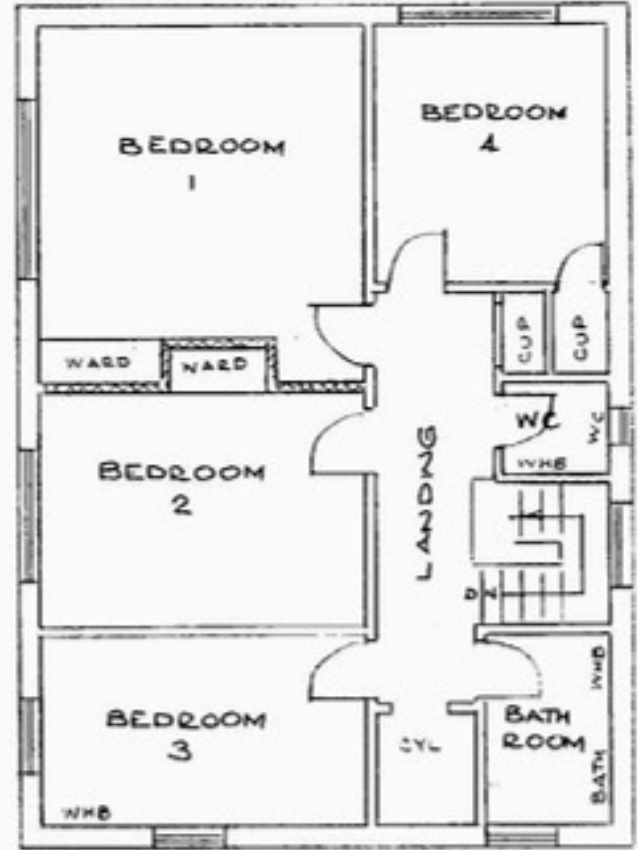
Medomsley

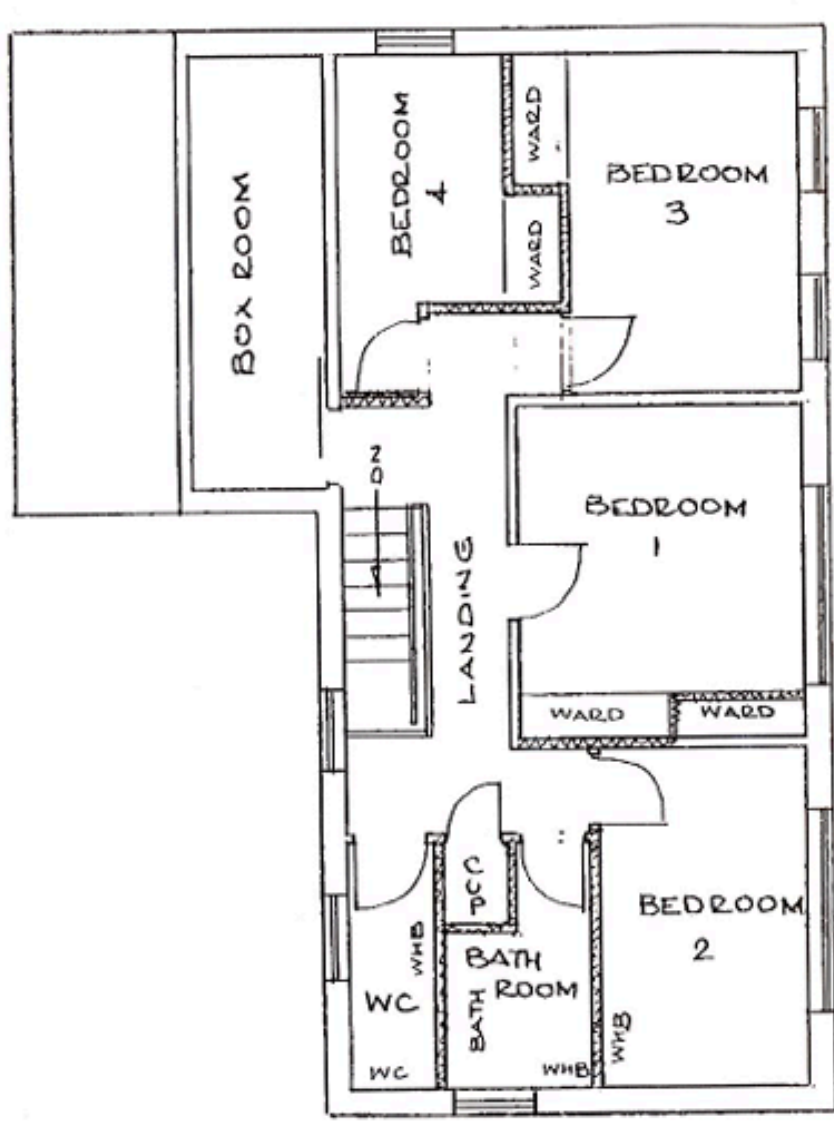
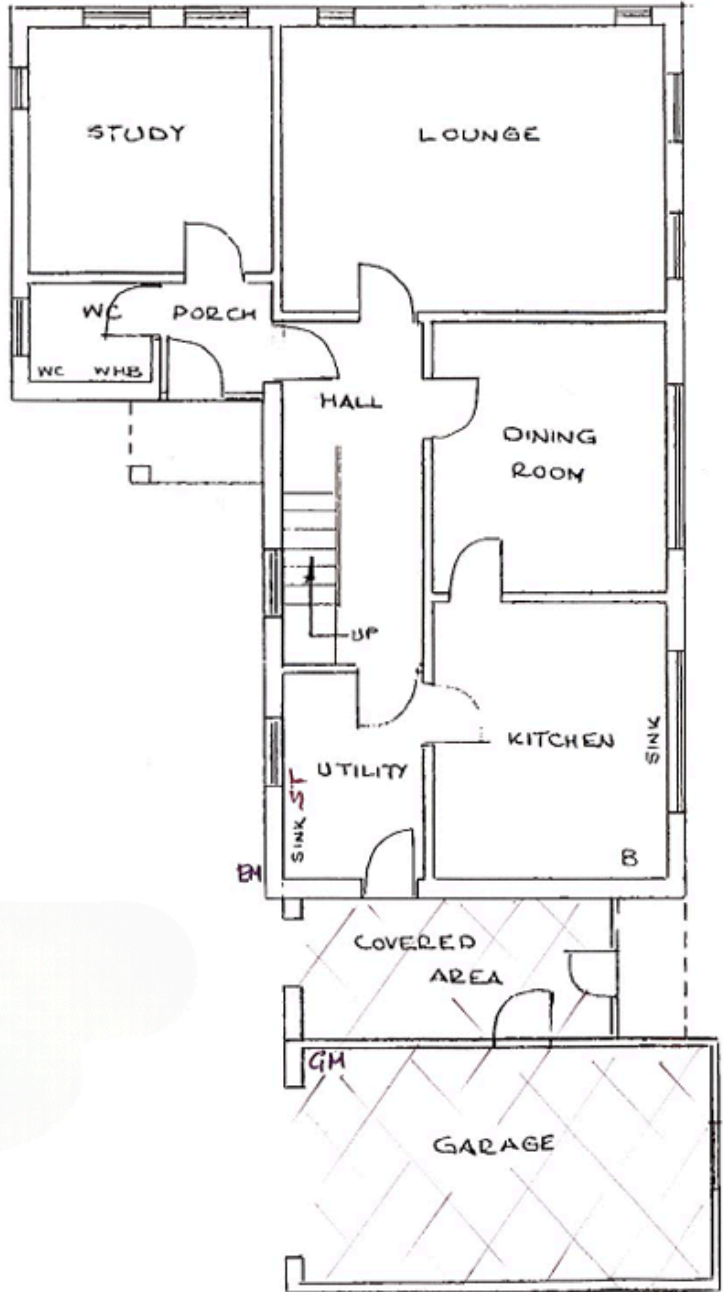


Appendix 1 - Floor Plans



Ebchester Rectory Floorplan





Leadgate Vicarage Floorplan