

The Benefice of Ditton Priors (St John the Baptist) with Neenton, Burwarton, Cleobury North, Aston Botterell, Wheathill and Loughton and Chetton.

Known as Brown Clee United Benefice

Profile and Statement of Needs for the Post of Priest in Charge (0.5)



The Benefice - Brown Clee – Rural Shropshire at its beautiful best

Set in the beautiful rolling countryside of south Shropshire the united benefice consists of five parishes and seven churches in the Diocese of Hereford. Lying to the west of the West Midlands conurbation, Shropshire, once the birth-place of the industrial revolution, offers glorious countryside, historic towns, and fabulous visitor attractions. If you enjoy experiencing a sense of the past, good food, exercise and entertainment, then Shropshire is for you.



The population of the benefice is sparse, totalling approximately 1660. Ditton Priors is the main centre with a population of 821 and offers many local facilities including doctor's surgery with dispensary, post office, shop, garage, village hall, recreation field with pavilion, school, tea room and pub with restaurant. The other population centres are smaller and have relatively fewer facilities.



The trend is for incremental growth in our communities. There has been small scale housing development in Ditton Priors and Neenton in recent years and some in-fill development in other villages. A development of 16 homes is currently in progress in Ditton Priors and 5 are planned for Aston Botterell.

There is a strong sense of belonging with many community events and organisations both secular and church-based. These have inevitably been curtailed during the Covid pandemic and most are yet to return fully to normal. When asked, the majority of people describe their communities as friendly and safe with a strong sense of belonging, with good local community groups and services. Covid has highlighted how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful countryside environment.

The Benefice has been in the current formation for over 22 years. The recently retired incumbent had been in post since 2014.

Employment in Brown Clee is mainly agricultural-related although there is a small industrial estate at Ditton Priors. There are also opportunities in the pubs and restaurants, the Brown Clee School, the residential care homes, while others commute to work in the West Midlands conurbation and Telford. Overall, the population is mixed age range from young to retired.

The largest one-day agricultural show in the country – The Burwarton Show – is held every year on the first Thursday in August. For our community this is a great opportunity to meet friends old and new. For our churches there is the opportunity to raise much needed funds through providing refreshments. The vicar serves as chaplain to the show.

The area covered by Brown Clee benefice is a great place to live and offers an exciting opportunity to develop a ministry which is an integral part of our community, helping us to grow spiritually as individuals and church.

Our Ministry

Open and friendly, our worship style is informal and does not vary widely between the churches. Our beliefs reflect the Christian faith summarised in the Apostles Creed.

We prefer teaching that is biblically based, preaches the Gospel, and is related to the world we live in.

Visitors and newcomers usually describe a friendly welcome and we try to be open to all, whatever their age or belief. We are seeking ways to make church more welcoming, sociable and suitable for younger families and people of all ages and cultures to attend church regularly.

Since the pandemic our regular congregations vary in size between 5 and 25 depending on the church, with the largest congregation at Ditton Priors. As we are the only denomination with churches in the benefice, people come from a mix of Anglican traditions.

Service Pattern

We have a regular service pattern for the first four Sundays providing a service each Sunday at Ditton Priors with two services per month for Chetton, and one each for Aston Botterell, Burwarton with Cleobury North, and Neenton. Services at Wheathill and Loughton are held in monthly rotation on the third Sunday and alternate between Holy Communion and Evening Prayer. When there is a fifth Sunday there is a group Holy Communion service at 10.15am rotating between the churches.

Sunday	Ditton Priors	Aston Botterell	Chetton	Cleobury Nth	Neenton	Wheathill & Loughton
First	HC 9.45am	HC 11.30am				
Second	HC 9.45am		HC 11.30am			
Third	HC 9.45am				HC 11.30am	2.30pm winter, 6.00pm summer
Fourth	HC 8.30am BCP		HC 9.45am	HC 11.30am		
Fifth	HC 10.15am - Group Service					

HC – Holy Communion

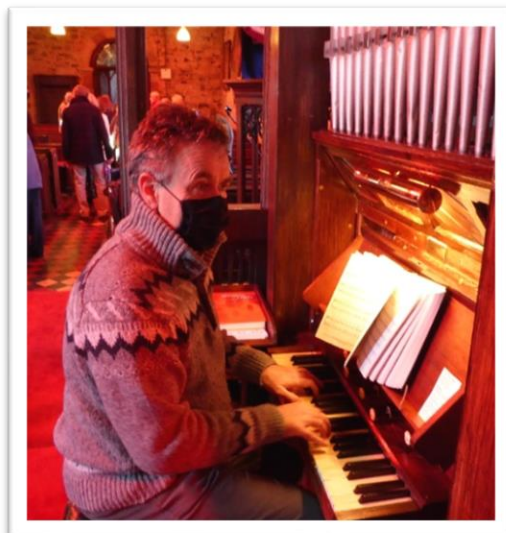
During the previous incumbency we also held a very informal Communion service at 10.00am on Tuesdays alternating between Ditton Priors and Cleobury North which allowed the fourth Sunday to be used for group services in the summer months. These mid-week services were much appreciated, especially at Cleobury North where a larger and different congregation attended. We would like to revisit this once a new incumbent is in place. We are open to exploring patterns of worship where not all services are Holy Communion. A desire for more informal services (could be lay led) and more group services was expressed at the vacancy consultation meeting.

An annual Memorial Service provides an opportunity for bereaved families to join us as we pray for them and the souls of the departed.

Liturgy is Common Worship except for the 8.30am Holy Communion at Ditton Priors which is BCP. The liturgy is said at all services. Informal services are very welcome and are well attended.

Music – A mix of modern and traditional hymns are sung at most services – we are blessed with organists at Ditton Priors and Cleobury North. We have a Group Choir of 6 to 10 singers, led by Michael Teague, who are dedicated to enhancing and supporting worship at group services, major festival services, carol services, harvest festivals, weddings and funerals. We want to continue to grow the choir which provides a way into church life through music –

the choir is open to all and very welcoming. We also want to build children's and adult's contributions to music in church and build on the enthusiasm there is to form a music group.



Help and Support

The decision that this should now become a half-time post is a cause of concern to many in our parishes. Consequently, we have been considering how to adjust to this new reality.

We recognise that we need to be realistic and support the successful candidate to make sure the half-time role is doable. Our Local Ministry Group and churchwardens are used to collaborative working – you will not be on your own!



Lay Ministry - We have a Lay Reader who preaches, and a lively Local Ministry Group who lead some services and assist at others by reading the liturgy, reading the Bible, leading intercessions and assisting with the chalice in Holy Communion. This group includes two churchwardens as well as our Lay Reader.

Administrative Support – We are keen to provide administrative support to allow our new priest to focus on priestly ministry. We already have a group Health and Safety Officer, a group Safeguarding Officer, an editor of A Church Near You, and a team that produces the Wheatland News parish magazine. Once our new priest is appointed we would like to explore the possibility of providing further administrative support.

The School – Brown Clee CofE Primary School is a Voluntary Controlled School for ages 4 to 11 years with over 100 pupils and in 2019 was judged by OFSTED to have maintained its performance as a good school. We love to welcome the school into church to celebrate significant festivals/occasions throughout the school year and to take the Bible into school through monthly Open the Book sessions. The school welcomes the vicar to lead collective worship at least once a half term. The vicar is an ex-officio member of the school's governing body and the school welcomes their involvement in supporting, challenging, and further developing the school's Christian distinctiveness.

The Diocese Education Team provides training to support clergy in their roles as ex-officio governors and network events to support their ministry within the local schools. You would be supported to further develop a strong bridge between the local church community and the school.

Little Explorers Nursery – adjacent to the school, the pre-school nursery welcomes a visit by the vicar at least once a half term and appreciates joining school services in church.

Care Homes – before the pandemic monthly communion by extension services were held in the care homes led by members of the LMDG with additional seasonal services with hymns led by the vicar. Once the pandemic restrictions are lifted we want to restart these services and offer pastoral visiting for residents.



Remembrance - Remembrance is important to our communities, with memorials at Cleobury North, Ditton Priors, Neenton and Wheathill and three well attended services with wreath laying.

There is also a memorial on Brown Clee Hill which remembers 23 Allied and German airmen killed in flying accidents on the Brown Clee Hills during the second world war.

A well attended service of remembrance was traditionally held there every year with several people walking or riding to the spot.

Activities

Outside the regular services, church-related activity consists of group choir, ladies fellowship, men's breakfast fellowship, and open coffee morning, all at Ditton Priors. With the exception of group choir these activities remain suspended following the Covid pandemic.

In normal times, all parishes hold fund-raising events for our churches – they are essential to our finances but are also good social events. They are attended by those who don't attend church and include fetes, concerts, and suppers etc.

Many members of our congregations are active in the community in various roles including councillors, school governors and members of various clubs and committees including Burwarton Show Committee.

Keeping in Touch

The parish magazine, Wheatland News, is published monthly in the benefice on behalf of 3 neighbouring benefices to the west of the Severn. This magazine provides local church and community news as well as times and dates of services and other events. A lack of printed copies during the pandemic has impacted on our ability to communicate with our parishioners.

We use A Church Near You to provide a benefice information hub containing church news, dates and times of services and other events and to publish Wheatland News electronically. Please visit

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/10502/>

There are also local Facebook groups in Wheathill and Ditton Priors which provide useful additional communications channels. Neenton has a local Whatsapp group for communication. We need to strengthen our social media presence to provide better communication to younger audiences.

Our Future

The pandemic has led to people in the area becoming more socially isolated than they were. We believe that now, more than ever, there is a need for an active Christian presence across Brown Clee that can help communities rebuild their resilience and to provide pastoral care.

We are encouraged that growth is possible by the attendance at our Crib Service in December 2021, 15 families, consisting of 30 adults and 25 children. In addition approximately 65 people attended our traditional services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. We are also encouraged by the lively activity across the benefice and that there is the critical mass needed for the family of God to grow and flourish here.

We believe that future growth lies in:

- extending connections with the local area primary school where Open the Book has been received enthusiastically.
- developing relationships with younger families through Messy Church based in a community space.
- reinvigorating our youth work and after school youth club.



- making Christian life more accessible for those unfamiliar with liturgy and tradition.
- developing patterns of worship that are relevant to all our community and to offer all age worship.
- pastoral care.
- welcoming new community members to encourage them to get involved in church and community life.

We want to build on the strong sense of cohesive identity within the benefice and relaunch the monthly united service suspended in interregnum. With the right guidance and support we are looking to grow our congregations as we continue to develop our presence in the community.

With support and training we see our future as one where we grow our lay ministry in worship and pastoral care, improving consistency, contacts and follow up for baptisms, confirmation, weddings and bereavement. We believe we can develop to be effective eyes and ears for the vicar and pool our energies so that we share the load.

We aim to continue to work to have a positive impact on society at home and abroad by active giving.

There is much talent and goodwill across the community which provides a solid foundation for God's work here.

Our Churches

Our church buildings are much loved by their communities and congregations, tending to be the most important historic building in villages. Each church has provided parish specific information later in this profile. Our churches are all historic and interesting buildings in different states of repair. All but Neenton and Loughton are listed Grade II*. Neenton is listed Grade II for the Memorial Stained Glass Window by William Morris. Loughton is not listed but a yew tree in the churchyard is pre-Norman, one of the oldest trees in England and the first to be carbon dated.

Ditton Priors and Aston Botterell are in generally good condition following extensive refurbishment at the latter. Most of the others are in reasonable condition, needing some remedial work. Urgent drainage and damp proofing works to enable repairs to the Nave floor are required at Loughton which is open but with restricted capacity.

There are no toilet facilities in any of our churches but all manage to provide refreshments on appropriate occasions. We would like to improve the facilities in our churches, especially to progress our outline plans to provide toilets and a refreshment area at Ditton Priors.

With the exception of Neenton all churches can be cold in winter but all offer a warm, hospitable welcome from friendly congregations.

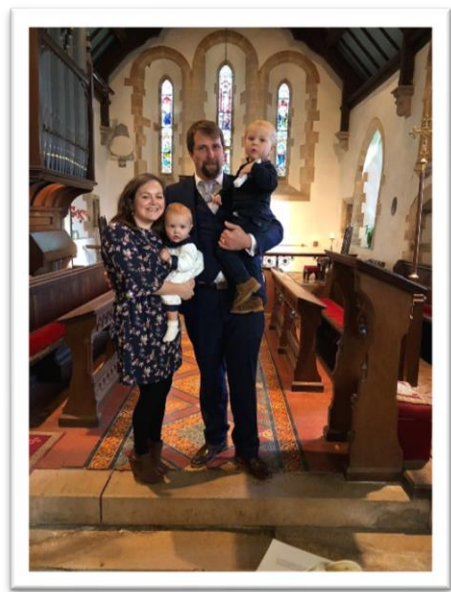
Key Qualities

We would like our new vicar to have the following key qualities:

- Be approachable, friendly and welcoming with a sense of humour.
- A prayerful person of deep Christian faith who is an effective and inspiring Bible teacher/preacher.
- Have an understanding of and empathy for rural life with a commitment to build links between the church and community organisations.
- Be committed to encouraging, enabling and nurturing the ministry of the whole people of God.
- An effective leader and communicator.
- Enthusiasm for working with the school, children and young people.
- Have experience of leading worship for children.
- An appreciation of music and its role in worship.
- Computer literate, familiar with social networking, good administrative skills.
- Own car and driver's licence is essential to get around a comparatively large area on country roads.

A more complete Job Description and Person Specification is to be found later in this document.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE





Finances

In recent years the benefice has usually paid its parish shares in full. However, the Covid pandemic has had a substantial impact on all aspects of church life, including fundraising, which has resulted in a necessary reduction in what we can afford to pay, leading to this post becoming part-time (0.5). We hope that this situation will improve as we move forward and aim to be financially sustainable once more. The following table provides a summary position at the end of 2020 financial year.

	Aston Botterell		Chetton		Cleobury North		Ditton Priors		Neenton		Wheathill & Loughton	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Income	3537	2512	19845	10374	8494	4278	45793	32964	4474	5517	3381	3434
Expenditure	3729	4700	15539	14747	6694	6037	47522	32896	5801	5497	2779	2735
Reserves	17284	15159	45505	41133	24060	23505	39391	39458	7069	7093	14463	15196

The results for 2020 reflect generous giving through a gift day but also significant reduction in our payments to the diocese, necessary to balance our books. The results for 2021 are not expected to show a significant recovery as the pandemic continues to cast a shadow over all church affairs.

Finance remains a significant challenge in all parishes, especially those most exposed to ageing populations and falling congregations.

We recognise the need to work together, with our new priest, to grow our congregations by attracting new and younger worshippers into our churches.

The Vicarage



The Vicarage is located in Ditton Priors, adjacent to the church.

Constructed in the 1960s, it is well maintained by the diocese and in good repair with excellent accommodation consisting of lounge, dining room, good size study with bookshelves, modern kitchen, utility room, hall and downstairs cloakroom. Upstairs there are 4 bedrooms, bathroom, separate toilet and shower.

The property has oil fired heating. It is a comfortable and easy to run home. The large garden is in good order. There is a garage and ample parking space.

Area Facilities

Most facilities are concentrated in Ditton Priors where there is a medical Centre with dispensary, Brown Clee CE Primary School, and a small industrial estate. There is also a convenience store, post office, garage & fuel supply, and a butchers shop. Ditton Priors Community Land Trust set up in 2013 to facilitate a green area for the village, has approximately 30 acres of land, a small 2.5 acre wood used by the school as a forest school, The Willows Tea Room, allotments, the local history and railway museums and a small farm, which is used for the day care of adults with learning difficulties, operated through Bethphage in conjunction with Shropshire Council. Ditton Priors Recreation Association has a playing field with pavilion, children's play area and a multi-use games area. The Howard Arms, Pub, is situated in the heart of the village and also offers a restaurant.

We have three good village halls at Ditton Priors, Cleobury North and Chetton which support a wide range of activities including art group, short mat bowls, local history group, community choir, football, cricket, fun & fitness, pilates, line dancing, folk dance club, gardening club, wives group and WI groups. In addition there is a community room within the pub at Neenton which is available for community use on Monday and Tuesday.

There is a football pitch and cricket ground at Burwarton with Cleobury North.

Residents in the smaller parishes travel to reach facilities nearby:

- Aston Botterell - within 2-3 miles, two pubs (at Wheathill and Burwarton), shop and village hall (at Cleobury North). The facilities of Ditton Priors are 5-6 miles away.
- Burwarton with Cleobury North – pub, shop with post office, village hall, mobile library. Ditton Priors is 2-3 miles away.
- Chetton - pub and village hall. Placed on the Bridgnorth side of the group, 7- 8 miles from Ditton Priors, residents tend to use the facilities in Bridgnorth which is 4-5 miles away.
- Neenton - pub including a community room. Intermittent bus service provided by Bridgnorth Community Transport. Cleobury North is 1-2 miles away, Ditton Priors 4 miles.
- Wheathill - pub. Cleobury North is 4-5 miles away and Ditton Priors 6-7 miles. Wheathill is closer to the market town of Ludlow than Bridgnorth. Ludlow is 10 miles away, Bridgnorth 12-13 miles.
- Loughton – no facilities. Close to Wheathill, Cleobury North is 3 miles away, Ditton Priors 5 miles.

Transport

Residents are reliant on private transport as public transport is very limited.

Bridgnorth Community Transport provides a weekly community bus service which is used by residents to get to Bridgnorth for shopping.

Church members in Ditton Priors support a voluntary car scheme for visits to hospitals.

Community

It can be seen from the Facilities section above that there is wide range of community activity. In addition to those above we also have a very active group of Young Farmers, a local football club whose home ground is at Cleobury North, and a cricket club (at Burwarton). Community activities have inevitably been curtailed during the Covid pandemic and most are yet to return fully to normal. Brown Clee walkers are active, based in Ditton.

In common with many rural communities our biggest challenges are lack of transport, poor condition of the roads, long response times for emergency services, lack of broadband and mobile phone reception, lack of affordable housing, and few activities/places for children outside Ditton Priors.

There are also concerns about the urbanisation of the countryside and some residual tension in the community resulting from strong opposition to recent developments.

Deanery and Diocese

Bridgnorth Deanery

Bridgnorth Deanery is situated on the North East corner of Hereford Diocese, and is based around the market town of Bridgnorth, which has a population of about 12,000. The deanery divides geographically into three principal areas: the Bridgnorth Team Ministry, including the town and surrounding villages; the south-west benefices of Brown Clee, Stottesdon and Severn Valley which are mainly rural and agricultural except for the old mining town of Highley; and, east of the River Severn, Worfield, Claverley and Alveley which look more towards the adjoining urban West Midlands. The river runs north to south through the deanery with the only bridge in Bridgnorth.

Despite this physical division, we treasure our diversity and try to keep a combined vision across the deanery and support each other in ministry across the seven benefices. The pandemic time has made this difficult, of course. Deanery gatherings have been few, as many Synod Representatives are not comfortable with online meeting platforms, but we have met for preliminary discussions about the shape of the church in our deanery as we move on beyond Covid.

Chapter meets, generally, on a monthly basis: sometimes we have a guest speaker, sometimes we have lunch together, sometimes we just meet to chat over a coffee and biscuits! During lockdown times we have been meeting online on a more regular drop-in basis to provide each other with support and to share experiences.

As well as the stipendiary clergy in the deanery we are blessed with SSMs, active retired clergy and Readers (Licensed Lay Ministers) who offer a great deal of support to God's ministry across the deanery. SSMs and Readers join us for Greater Chapter meetings on occasions that we are seeking to increase, as they provide such invaluable support – not just in their own parishes, but across the deanery.

Our Mission Action Plan is beginning the process of updating, and we are encouraging our parishes to join the Eco-churches organisation, Hereford having resolved to be an Eco-Diocese. In terms of social action, all churches contribute to the Food Bank in Bridgnorth, which is an ecumenical initiative, and we are establishing links with CAP. We would also like to be able to provide some training within the deanery to extend and encourage the already flourishing lay participation in church leadership.

We have an Intergenerational Missioner in Bridgnorth. Although her work is mainly focussed in the town, we would like to extend that to links around the deanery, especially in our many CE Primary Schools, where there are already active Open the Book teams in operation, many of them ecumenical.

We are looking forward to new members of our deanery chapter bringing new ideas and fresh approaches as we seek to serve God's kingdom together in our churches.

Hereford Diocese

The Diocese of Hereford is a place of contrasts. We're geographically large, but our population is small. We straddle six local authorities (Herefordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Telford & Wrekin, Monmouthshire, and Powys) and two countries (England and Wales), but we are one Diocese with one Bishop. We are predominantly rural, with scattered communities, but we have a vibrant cathedral city, several historic market towns, and serve estate communities as well.

We are committed, whatever our context, to our calling to make Christ known, to love God, one another and our neighbours, and to work for the common good. We do this not only through our churches but also through our church schools and academies which are an integral part of our Diocese.

The Diocese has two Archdeaconries: Ludlow in the north and Hereford in the south. The Archdeacons work closely together and share responsibility for clergy wellbeing and support, as well as each having their own areas of responsibility.

We work collaboratively wherever possible, knowing that ministry brings unique demands as well as unique privileges. We are small enough (in terms of numbers) that clergy can get to know one another and the diocesan staff quite easily.

Being a 0.5 post, this role would offer the opportunity for the person appointed to work in secular employment alongside ministry, to pursue academic studies, or to combine parish ministry with childcare or other caring responsibilities.

If you would like to know more about life as a member of the clergy in the Diocese of Hereford please contact the Archdeacon of Ludlow (contact details on page 24).

St. John the Baptist, Ditton Priors



A lovely church, situated in the centre of this small rural village, population 821, which is approximately 9 miles from the market town of Bridgnorth and 13 miles from Ludlow.

Ditton Priors is mentioned in the Domesday Book. The original stone church has stood since 1186, with a chancel and south aisle added in the 13th century. It has an impressive open timber roof and a carved wooden screen which dates back to the 16th century. An Architectural Guide for visitors explains the many interesting features more fully. The church was originally dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin, but in 1831 it was rededicated as St. John the Baptist. The church is open to visitors during the day time and is listed in the Shropshire Churches Tourism Guide.

Congregation – Average attendance at the 9.45am Communion service has reduced since the pandemic to 25 from 35, the 8.30am (BCP) is 10 members. The core of weekly worshippers range from young families to retirees. Before the pandemic we were seeing growth in our congregation and hope this will resume when life finally returns to normal. After our 9.45am service we serve excellent coffee and biscuits.

Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals and Confirmations

Year	Weddings	Baptisms	Funerals	Memorial	Burial of Ashes	Confirmations
2018		2	8			
2019	6	4	4			
2020	1	1	4			
2021		4	4	1	2	

Social Events – we hold numerous events throughout the year – not only does this help to raise money to meet our expenses but it is a great way of socialising in the village. It is good to use the church for some of these events. We also try to support other organisations nearby and most of us are engaged in all aspects of village life.

Community Involvement - Members of church and PCC are well represented on village hall, school, parish council and playing field committees. For the Future – we hope to keep sharing our many blessings with others and to continue supporting several chosen charities each year, both at home and abroad. We actively collect for Bridgnorth food bank.

Churchyard – the churchyard is well kept but only open for the interment of ashes. Burials are in a detached churchyard, owned and maintained by the PCC, adjacent to The Vicarage. Both sites are kept in good order and looked after by a paid professional, plus regular visits from our expert volunteers.

Finances - we have always paid our parish share in full but have had to rely on fundraising to achieve this. The Covid situation has hit our finances hard.

The Friends of St John the Baptist Church in Ditton Priors is a trust set up to help maintain the fabric of the church and its monuments. It has no religious or ecclesiastical bias and is supported by members of all faiths and creeds, and none.

St. Michael and All Angels, Aston Botterell



The Church of St Michael and All Angels is a Grade II* listed building of which the Parish is very proud. It is our only Parish building sitting in the heart of a very agricultural Parish, population 74 living in 30 houses.

The Church and Churchyard are in excellent condition following recent renovation. The Churchyard is open for new burials and the interment of ashes.

Congregation - the monthly congregation is approximately 6 – 8 people. Special services like Harvest are well attended with approximately 35 people attending before the pandemic. Since the pandemic this has reduced to approximately 25. Age profile is mixed.

Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals and Confirmations

There have been no weddings, baptisms, funerals or confirmations in the last 3 years although a wedding is scheduled for May 2022.

History - the church chancel is believed to originate from the 12th century, with the roof updated in the 15th century. The tower was taken down and rebuilt in 1884 and the porch added in 1639. A large canopied monument to John Botterell and his wife (1588) is situated in the south aisle.

Recent Major Repairs

2000 to 2002: Complete new roof and guttering, repairs to stained glass windows, repair of the Botterell Monument

2012 to 2014: Complete new tower roof, repair of East wall, new surrounding French drain, plus renewal of the central floor, pulpit floor, repair of the kneeling pads, and a brand new notice board!!

Finances - we always contribute our full share, and our fundraising has excelled itself in recent years to pay for the renovation works. Increasing expenditure is quite worrying to our little Parish, but the support of local residents still continues.

St. Giles Church, Chetton



Chetton, population 249, is about 5 miles from Bridgnorth along the B4364 Ludlow Road. It is widely accepted that the Saxon Manor of Chetton was owned by the wife of Leofric Earl of Mercia, better known to history as Lady Godiva. Today we smile when we feel the winds whipping around the Preaching Cross she had placed in the Churchyard. If she had ridden around Chetton naked she would surely have caught a fatal cold. The Church is dedicated to St Giles of Provence and the Festival of St Giles is on 1st September.

The parish of Chetton is a scattered community along either side of the main Ludlow Road. The Church stands at the heart of Chetton village at the top of the hill up a dead end lane running past the Village Hall on the corner of the main road. The turning is approx. ½ mile south of The Down Inn.

We are proud that the Down Inn offers travellers a warm welcome for meals and has modern rooms for overnight guests seeking to enjoy the area and its many attractions.

The Church is a member of the Shropshire Churches Tourism Group and is open every day for visitors and those seeking a calm reflective space amidst the bustle of modern life.



Church History - The building may well have been started in those Saxon times by Lady Godiva and by the Domesday 1086 there was a resident Priest. What we see today is a West Tower rebuilt in 1829 with a peal of 6 Bells. Sadly the bells are no longer rung but are in good repair and we hope to recruit a Tower Captain in the near future.

The South door is reached through an open Porch; inside the Medieval Font has a 20th century wooden cover in memory of Rev R B Southwell who was Rector of the Parish of Chetton and Glazeley from 1909 to 1953. The Nave was restored in 1891 by the Pardoe-Purton family of local Bankers who had lived at Faintree Hall in the Parish. Our Chancel has medieval origins, and there are some interesting stonework features like the female head with head dress on the North side and male head with chain and strap carved on the South side.

Congregation – Attendance has been fairly stable over recent years with 10 to 14 attending our two Common Worship services a month and does not appear to have been affected by the pandemic. Age profile is 50+.

We hold special celebration services during the year, for instance Harvest Festival, Carol Service and a family celebration of Holy Communion on Christmas morning these are usually well attended.

We look forward to welcoming new worshippers and encourage those who wish to read Lessons or lead intercessions at our Services.

We have an active Parochial Church Council and hold regular fundraising events to have fun within our community and to pass on a thriving Church to the next generation these include Coffee Mornings, Lunches, Suppers, Church Breakfast at the Down Inn and “Chetfest”.

Several members are actively involved in charitable works – notably the Shropshire Vintage Tractor Run, now in its 23rd year, which has raised tens of thousands of pounds towards the Midlands Air Ambulance service which provides life-saving services in Shropshire.

Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals and Confirmations

Year	Weddings	Baptisms	Funerals	Memorial	Burial of Ashes	Confirmations
2019		2	3			
2020			2		1	
2021	1	2	1			

Churchyard – the Churchyard is open for burials and interment of ashes and is well kept.

Expected Repairs – the latest quinquennial inspection reported the need for repairs to the Tower parapet within 18 months and renovation of the porch within 5 years. We expect to be proceeding with these works during the next incumbency.

SS Peter and Paul, Cleobury North



We are a rural community covering two small villages (Burwarton and Cleobury North) and scattered farms population is 233. Our church building dates back to 1200.

We have regular services of Holy Communion and group benefice services. In addition celebrating special services at Harvest, Christmas, and on Remembrance Sunday; there is a war memorial in our churchyard and wreaths are laid each year.

The churchyard is open and we participate in Caring for God's acre scheme.

The well maintained village hall is well used by the community for a variety of social clubs, events and meetings.

We all try to help one another, visiting those who are unable to reach the village shop. Taking home communion into the homes of the sick and elderly and calling on those who are sick at home or in hospital.

There is a church lottery, which is well supported and gives contact to parishioners who do not attend church services as well as raising funds.

Congregation – current average attendance is 7 to 11, mostly in the 50+ age group.

Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals and Confirmations

Year	Weddings	Baptisms	Funerals	Memorial	Burial of Ashes	Confirmations
2019		2	1		1	
2020		2	1		3	
2021	1	1	1	1		

All Saints, Neenton



The parish of Neenton is situated some 5 miles from Ditton Priors and 6 miles from Bridgnorth. We have 153 residents of various ages. The pub and church lie at the centre of the village.

The pub was reopened following refurbishment in 2014 by Neenton Community Society Ltd, an Independent Provident Society with charitable status, and has, once again, become the hub of village life. Close links with the church, situated directly opposite, have already developed, with the pub providing free use of its grounds and refreshments for church events. Neenton Community Society are keen to develop these relationships further for the benefit of the community

The sale of land behind the pub also made provision for a small housing development.

There is a very limited bus service through Neenton to Bridgnorth and Ludlow. Most people use their own transport to get to facilities at Ditton Priors and Bridgnorth.

We have a small fun and fundraising group of all faiths set up to raise funds for the church and other charities . This group meets every 2 – 3 months and has a provisional programme of events organised for 2022, government restrictions allowing. We meet in The Pheasant on a Monday or Tuesday evening.



The Church - The current church was built in 1871 and was built by Sir Arthur Blomfield. It is the third church built on the site and has a welcoming atmosphere with a well-lit open single nave. There is nothing left of the previous churches, except a 15th century carved chest and a plain Norman font.

The main feature is a William Morris stained glass window above the altar which also serves as a war memorial for the people in the village who died in the First World War.

A Remembrance service is held every year on 11th November to commemorate the fallen, candles are lit and crosses are placed on the altar and following the service these are then moved to the base of the window, behind the altar. This service, unlike the others in the benefice, is informal and usually lay led.

The churchyard is open and generally well maintained, using Caring for Gods Acre for some areas which look beautiful in the spring together with the bulbs donated and planted by one of our residents. We are proud that there is an Islamic burial here following the recent sad loss of a beloved daughter of one local family who are able to see their daughters grave from their window.

All Saints Church at Neenton is the warmest church in the benefice with under-seat heating, installed by a far sighted Reader many years ago. The fabric of the church is generally in good condition, however a few problems have

emerged over the past year which will need addressing. Attention is needed to the surround of the stained glass window. There are no toilets attached to the church or in the grounds.

Congregation - The congregation is small with 6 regular worshippers joined by others from time to time. The average age of the congregation is 70+ years with young children (pupils at Brown Clee School) participating in our services at Easter, Harvest and Christmas. Group services and special services are well attended by members of other churches and the residents in the village. The children and young people enjoy taking part in the services by reading, singing and playing instruments.



Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals and Confirmations

Year	Weddings	Baptisms	Funerals	Memorial	Burial of Ashes	Confirmations
2019		1			1	
2020						
2021					1	

Fundraising has continued when restrictions have allowed throughout the year with all the events being supported by people from the village. The events have included our special Annual Fete and Duck Race on the Rae Brook. The parish share has been paid in full each financial year, but becomes increasingly difficult with the few people involved – regular giving is encouraged.

The Pheasant Inn is directly opposite the church and is now owned by the community, with part of the restoration including a community room which is available for use for meetings etc during the day when the pub is closed. There are excellent links with the church with events taking place and social gatherings following services and concerts in the church. Parking is also available in the pub car park. There are three letting bedrooms available which may increase the congregation at times. Seven new houses were built at the rear of the pub in a small development with outstanding views down the valley of the Rae Brook.

Community Involvement - church members and supporters are active in the Neenton Community Society, there is a Reader and a Foundation School Governor and the editor of the Wheatland News, the church magazine, also resident in Neenton.

Our vision is to grow the size of our congregation, which we hope will be possible with the right leadership, the connections with the continuing development of the pub, the new houses and with new residents arriving elsewhere in the village, as others move on, together with continuing support from other parishes in the benefice. We have an enthusiastic group of local people who support us in the form of the fun and fundraising group previously mentioned.

Holy Trinity, Wheathill & Loughton



Holy Trinity, Wheathill

Wheathill

Our Parish – Wheathill is a small parish with one pub. It lies between Brown Clee and Titterstone Clee with fantastic views all round. Wheathill is about 2-3 miles from the nearest shop and village hall at Cleobury North and approximately 7 miles from Ludlow. We have a population of about 90.

Our Church – Wheathill church is Grade II* listed. It has a Norman Chancel Archway and a Norman main entrance although the porch was added later. There is a Norman window, and evidence of a priest door to the chancel. The communion table, chair and altar rails are Jacobean. We have a beautiful view looking south from the church. There are 2 bells. Bell number 1 is thought to be medieval and bell number 2 is thought to have been cast in 1640.

The churchyard is well maintained and open for burials.

Condition of Fabric – The fabric of the church is in reasonable condition but the church is unheated so gets very cold in winter. We would like to consider installing a modern heating system.

Congregation – We have a small congregation, approximately 6 to 8 for our regular services, most of whom are 70+. At Remembrance, Christmas and other special services our church is better attended and can be full.

Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals and Confirmations

None in the last three years. The last entry in the registers is a baptism on 24th June 2018

Loughton



Loughton Church

The church is situated at the middle of the village of Loughton, with a farm on either side. The village consists of about a dozen houses, population about 40 people. Situated 10 miles from Ludlow and 11 miles from Bridgnorth. The church is the only community space within the village. There is community interest in making use of the building for community events.

The present building dates from 1622. The earliest mention of a building at Loughton is 1291. Above the south window there is an inscription "This church was built by Bonham Norton Esquire A.D. 1622". Mr Norton was a High Sheriff of Shropshire in 1611.

The main building seats 50 to 60. Lighting was, years ago, by oil lamps, then gas and in c1963 electric lighting was installed. The porch is a Victorian addition. The church was restored in 1907 and again in 1997.

Urgent drainage and damp proofing works to enable successful repair of the Nave floor are required. The church is currently open but with limited capacity.

There are no graves at this church, but a grass area of approximately one third of an acre. Laurel trees are in one corner, and one side is a boundary of large trees, the other side is fenced and hedged.

There is one of the oldest trees in the County – a yew which is the first tree in the world to be carbon dated and is pre-Norman. The tree is estimated to be over 1,000 years old and it has a circumference of 32 feet at BHQG(Breast High Quarter Girth).

There is a bell tower which has been repaired some years ago and the bell works. The church is built on a slight mound. The gate to the church is off the main road and the churchyard is full of daffodils and other wild flowers.

There was a cast iron stove to heat the church years ago but the church is now heated by electric heaters on the walls.

The registers date from 1812.

Congregation - We have a small congregation, approximately 4 to 6 for our regular services, most are 70+. At Harvest, Christmas and other special services our church is better attended and can be full. There are no Weddings, Baptisms, Funerals and Confirmations at this church.

Job Description and Person Specification

The Vacancy

The vacancy has arisen because of the retirement of the previous incumbent who ministered to these parishes for 7 years. The Benefice welcomes applications from candidates regardless of gender, ethnicity or marital status.

Job Description and Responsibilities

This part time post provides an exciting opportunity to develop local ministry in an enthusiastic, supportive multi-parish benefice.

The responsibilities of this post will include:

- Leading the pastoral and spiritual ministry in the benefice.
- Leading worship in the benefice.
- Engaging with and sharing in the life of the communities of the benefice.
- Working collaboratively with the Reader and lay leaders of worship across the parishes.
- Further developing and supporting ministry to children and young people.
- Active involvement with Brown Clee CE Primary School.
- Serving on the school's Governing body to support challenge and further develop the school's Christian distinctiveness.
- Leading school assembly at least once a half term.
- Leading youth work and mentoring leaders.
- Guiding the Local Ministry Group and supporting and encouraging people to become involved with this aspect of church life and work.
- Carrying out pastoral visiting to those in need, with support and involvement from members of the church.
- Chairing and supporting Group PCC meetings and Annual Parish Church Meetings across the benefice.
- Chaplaincy to Burwarton & District Agricultural Society, including annual show.
- Writing a monthly letter for the Wheatlands News (parish magazine).

Person Specification

We would like our new vicar to have the following key qualities:

- Be approachable, friendly and welcoming, have a sense of humour.
- A prayerful person of deep Christian faith who is an effective and inspiring Bible teacher who preaches the gospel.
- Have energy and vision for rural ministry with a commitment to build links between the church and community organisations.
- A pastoral heart and a willingness to be visible in the communities which he/she serves
- Be committed to encouraging, enabling and nurturing the ministry of the whole people of God.
- An effective leader and communicator.
- Enthusiasm for working with the school, children and young people.
- Have experience of leading worship for children.
- An appreciation of music and its role in worship.
- Committed to working as a member of a team, with clergy and laity, willing to delegate and develop the ministry of others.
- Computer literate, familiar with social networking, good administrative skills.
- Own car and driver's licence is essential to get around a comparatively large area on country roads.

Conclusion: This post offers a fine opportunity for the new vicar to exercise a wide-ranging and fulfilling ministry, working together with friendly and supportive people in a beautiful part of south Shropshire, among communities who are keen to support their new priest.

Applications should be submitted via the Church of England Pathways System which can be accessed from the vacancy details on the diocesan website <https://www.hereford.anglican.org/xdb/vacancies>.

If you would like an informal conversation about this post please contact the Archdeacon of Ludlow, The Venerable Fiona Gibson, on 01588 673571 or Fiona.Gibson@hereford.anglican.org.

Closing date: 28th April 2022

Interviews: 24th May 2022