

## THE PARISH OF TARPORLEY: ST HELEN ST JOHN AND THE HOLY CROSS, ST THOMAS

Final



### Tarporley Parish Profile 2020

#### **“One Parish, Three Churches”**

*Throughout this profile, 'Tarporley' refers to the village of Tarporley.*

*'Tarporley Parish' includes the three settlements of Tarporley, Eaton and Cotebrook.*

*This Profile has been written in July 2020 as COVID-19 restrictions are being gradually lifted. The Profile describes the Parish in essentially pre-Coronavirus times.*

*This Profile should be read in conjunction with the Parish Fact Sheet and the Parish Annual Report 2019.*

#### **Summary**

This is a large, stable parish in a rural environment with a mature church community looking for an inspirational Rector to continue the work of our previous and current incumbents in leading the Parish in its Faith journey.

There are three churches in the Parish, the mother church, St Helen's Tarporley and daughter churches at Eaton and Cotebrook.

There is a curate in place and extensive lay support.

The Parish's physical assets are in relatively good order and it is relatively sound financially.

#### **A1. A brief description of the most significant aspects and features of the community**

##### **Geography**

Tarporley is a large village of 2,940 people in 1,450 households in a rural setting, lying roughly halfway between Chester and Crewe. Eaton, and Utkinton & Cotebrook are outlying settlements and all within a mile or so of Tarporley. The area is one of open farmland, though active dairy farming is declining. The A49 cuts Utkinton and Cotebrook and the A49 and A51 both bypass the village centre.

## History

Tarporley is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. The earliest record of the church dates from c.1200, though there may well have been a chapel on the site from late Saxon or early Norman times. The list of Rectors of this parish church starts in 1230. The village experienced noticeable growth 'through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as ... a staging post for the London to Chester coach'.

## Infrastructure



Tarporley's principal attraction is its High Street which, with its wide street, Coaching Inn and landmark chestnut tree, appears little changed from those days. The community is largely self-supporting, having amongst its shops businesses and supermarkets, a Post Office, hairdressers, clothing and shoe shops, an electrical goods shop, a hardware shop, several pubs and restaurants, a hotel, a chemist, garages, solicitors, accountants and a monthly country market.

There are also doctors' and dentists' surgeries, opticians, the War Memorial Cottage Hospital, a CofE (controlled) primary school (211 pupils) (OFSTED rated Good) of which the Rector is a governor, a secondary school (997 pupils), a pre-school, a community centre and recreation ground, a bowling green and a fire station. A Community Support Officer polices the village. There are three churches in the village: St Helen's Church of England, the Parish Church; and St Thomas Becket, Roman Catholic and Tarporley Chapel, a Baptist-Methodist church.

## **Local government & services**

Tarporley has an active Parish Council with an informative website. It falls within the Cheshire West and Chester unitary authority. Tarporley is on the bus route from Chester to Crewe. There is a Community Bus service between Tarporley and the local district general hospital, the Countess of Chester Hospital, and Cheshire Oaks shopping outlet village, and a Community Car service. Because the secondary school has a largely rural catchment, many pupils travel in by bus.

## **Housing**

Tarporley has a mix of housing within the village, plus outlying properties. There is a former council estate, of which only 52 units are now available as social housing<sup>1</sup>. The nearest nursing home is just outside the parish boundary. There are some small houses within the village centre, but also some large ones; in addition, several new developments have been built over the last 40 years and these offer predominantly 3- and 4-bedroom detached homes. There is some shared-ownership housing with a housing association. Property prices are high, and it is usual for young people to move away in order to find affordable housing to rent or buy. Outside the village centre, housing is sparse; it consists of a mixture of large farmhouses and smaller barn conversions. In recent years there have been a number of new housing developments in and around the village.

## **Employment**

Tarporley has a number of shops, businesses, restaurants/pubs and a hotel which provide employment opportunities in the village. Employment on farms is much reduced, partly due to mechanisation but also due to diversification away from dairy farming. Lying between Tarporley and Eaton village centres is a new hotel with spa and golf courses. This development has created new local jobs, though mainly casual and/or low-paid ones (e.g. waiting on and catering).

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## **Social activities**

There is a strong sense of community in Tarporley. The community noticeboard advertises clubs and events, and there is a popular community centre. There is also a smaller Hall, the Done Room, which is owned by the church and used for community as well as church events. There are numerous clubs and societies in the village. In addition, Tarporley Carnival is held every summer, culminating in a village day with arena events and stalls. Rotary and Round Table are active, offering such events as the annual 'Drop In' for free blood pressure tests. Freemasonry is strong. Also, Tarporley has its own Silver band. There is one monthly magazine, *Tarporley Talk*, which carries mostly advertisements and listings.

The Tarporley War Memorial cottage hospital is greatly valued and is essentially self-financing. It enables local people to receive treatment near home, and in-patients can be visited easily by friends and family. The hospital is supported by an active League of Friends. It is a significant competitor to the Church in terms of fund-raising activities.

## **Social profile**

Tarporley appears prosperous. Situated within commuting distance of Chester, Liverpool and Manchester, and with several good schools nearby, the village is attractive to high-earners with families. It is also popular with retired people, who form 25% of the population<sup>2</sup>, as it offers a good range of services and activities within a village atmosphere. 80% of homes are owner-occupied.

However, not everyone in Tarporley are affluent, and as so often in communities where wealth is very evident, the disparity between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' is keenly felt. The primary school, for example, offers an inclusive village ethos. It should, however, be remembered that it is a normal pattern of village social structures that wealthy people live in proximity to those with limited incomes; this can skew data on rural income and deprivation.

The ethnic profile of the parish is almost totally white British. Christian affiliation is 84%<sup>9</sup> (nationally 70%) though this does not mean 84% church attendance; average CofE weekly attendance is 2.9% (nationally 2.2%).

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The national incidence of domestic violence is 1 household in 8, though some working in that field believe it to be higher. There is no reason to believe that it does not occur in Tarporley.

**Eaton** is the main village in the parish of Rushton. It has approximately 300 inhabitants, who live in a mixture of private and social housing. There is an excellent Primary school with 173 pupils, a thriving village hall that hosts a myriad of activities and a coffee shop. The church of St Thomas fulfils the parishioners' needs and has a strong link with the school. The village is very much community orientated.

**Cotebrook and Utkinton.** Cotebrook village is divided by the busy A49. On the west side of this road are some residential properties, the church and the village hall. On the east side of the road are a café and two shops and a short way out of the centre there are two pubs. There are a few small houses, but many larger ones, particularly to the west looking onto open countryside. Cotebrook joins Utkinton village, which is also part of Tarporley Parish. Utkinton consists of a mixture of social and private housing, the latter consisting again predominantly of four-bedroom detached houses. There is a CofE (controlled) primary school for some 50 pupils. There is a thriving farm shop and Post Office which effectively forms the heart of the village. There is a village hall but no pub.

## **A2. A brief description of the most significant aspects and features of the churches**

There are three Church of England churches in Tarporley parish. The mother church, St Helen's in Tarporley, is the Parish Church. St Thomas, Eaton and St John and the Holy Cross, Cotebrook are daughter churches. All the churches work well together and co-operate but they are all distinct and different. The parish electoral roll numbers around 200.

### **Worship**

The established cycle of Sunday services is:

09:00 HC at St Thomas, Eaton (non-Eucharistic Open Worship on 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday, sung Eucharist on 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday)

10:00 HC at St Helen's, Tarporley (non-Eucharistic Open Worship on 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday)

Lightkeepers, for the young, meet on the 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays of each month during Communion Services at St Helens when there is no other special event. Led by a team of volunteers, the children leave during the service for a story and get involved in activities based on the readings in church and return just before Communion.

11:15 HC at St John &HC, Cotebrook (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday only)

18:30 Evensong at St Helen's (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday only)

10:00 HC at St Helen's each Wednesday

16:00 Messy Church: on most 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays except during holidays

### **Messy Church**



A series of seasonal service booklets has been introduced to differentiate the church seasons and which encompass a broad range of Christian liturgy. Lectures and Courses have been provided to deepen discipleship during Lent and on other occasions.



## St Helen's, Tarporley



The church is in the centre of the High Street, set slightly back, and plays a civic role e.g. on Remembrance Sunday. The church noticeboard is therefore on the High Street, close to the community noticeboard. There is free car parking along the High Street. Behind the church is the Done Room, a church hall with two rooms, lavatories and a kitchen. It is used regularly by the local pre-school and provides the church with some income to offset its costs. It is also available for church events, including the monthly Messy Church. Behind the Done Room, part of the Rectory garden forms the Done Room Orchard, available for use by all groups using the Done Room.

St Helen's is a Victorian building on the site of a much older church. It has a pleasing interior, including a side chapel and a baptistery, and seats around 300 people. The North-South transept runs across the nave three-quarters of the way towards the back, leading to doors on both the north and the south sides. Both are used. A rood screen divides the chancel from the nave. The choir vestry is at the west end of the building. Domestic facilities are provided in the nearby Done Room. St Helen's is open during daylight hours. The church is well cared for by volunteers; it has a graveyard which the PCC is looking to close.

St Helen's is undergoing a period of growth and change. The church does, however, have strong links with the church schools in Tarporley and Utkinton, and the number of services involving these children is increasing significantly. The congregation is relatively static, and there are a number of fundraising events each year which have increased social fellowship noticeably. St Helen's has an organist, a choir and a bell-ringing team. An audio-visual system has recently been installed including a retractable screen.

### **Wedding at St Helen's**





### **St Thomas, Eaton**



St Thomas is a small church in the centre of Eaton, with a well-maintained graveyard. It has a loyal regular and supportive congregation. St Thomas has an enthusiastic and competent choir that perform a sung Eucharist on the fourth Sunday of each month. The Rector is also welcomed into the Local Authority primary school in Eaton (173 pupils) to conduct assemblies regularly.

The congregation is cohesive and they, along with non-church members support the activities of the church. The church is well cared for and offers a warm welcome. Unfortunately, there is neither a lavatory nor a kitchen in the church but the Jessie Hughes Village Hall provides these facilities by arrangement. The church is kept locked, but there are telephone numbers on the notice board outside if anyone wishes to get in touch.

### **St John and the Holy Cross, Cotebrook**



A morning Eucharist takes place once a month at St John's. It is supported by a small but loyal congregation and an organist. The church building is maintained by

members of the congregation; it has Kempe windows on the Eastern wall. There is a graveyard and the church is locked unless a service is taking place. The village hall with car park and domestic facilities is adjacent.

### **The Rectory**



The Rectory is situated off the High Street next to St Helens Church in Tarporley. It enjoys fine views across the fields towards Beeston Castle and the Welsh Hills and is surrounded by a good-sized garden with a paved area outside the kitchen. The Rectory has downstairs a hall, office, sitting room with log burner, dining/reception room, kitchen with breakfast area and lavatory/cloakroom. Upstairs off the large landing there are four bedrooms and an airing cupboard.

The main bedroom has an en-suite shower room and two bedrooms have fitted cupboards. There is also a large bathroom. Outside there is a garage and two storerooms. The Rectory has recently had new double-glazed windows installed.

### **B. An analysis of the issues and needs of the community and the corresponding mission and ministry of the Church.**

Each of the three villages has a sense of community. Throughout, complacency is perhaps more of an issue than deprivation. Each of the three churches has a happy, secure and faithful congregation.

### **Tarporley**

The community has few 'issues' but is largely secular. The biggest challenge to the church is therefore to preach the Gospel, and this is the church's mission in Tarporley.

The style of worship or church tradition is very much central or modern Catholic with Common Worship for Eucharist services, and the introduction of a monthly non-Eucharistic "Open Worship" service, aimed at all ages of the church community.

The churches of Tarporley come together for shared acts of public (outdoor) witness and worship on Good Friday and the blessing of the Crib at Christmas and the Women's World Day of Prayer evening service.

A Remembrance Day Service is held at St Helen's.

The community has the same needs as many others in today's society i.e. people who are lonely, worried, sick or afraid. Almost 1,000 people live in 'single-adult' households (widowed, divorced etc.). The parish church is there for all souls; a consolidation of faithful worship is key, though along with this goes an increasingly strong and visible process of outreach, availability and welcome to non-regular churchgoers. Church ministry therefore places emphasis on pastoral visiting; on a visible and accessible profile in the community, including in schools; and on prayerful worship. Ministry is responsive rather than directive.

### **Eaton**

The church community is cohesive, but not totally representative of all village residents. The church's mission is therefore to extend its profile and welcome to all. This is an ongoing concern. The congregation remains largely middle aged due to a lack of affordable housing. Church fund raising appeals are always well supported by the village even by those who don't regularly come to the church. The church's ministry, as in Tarporley, emphasises pastoral visiting and prayerful worship.

### **Cotebrook**

The congregation at St Johns has been expanding gently. For the main feasts, the church is effectively full, swelled by visiting family members. The congregation remains largely middle-aged due to the lack of affordable housing in this small village. A further concern is the fact that a service is held only once a month. The church's mission is therefore to maintain a regular, attractive and consistently attended monthly act of worship. As before, the church's ministry emphasises pastoral visiting and prayerful worship.

## **Parish-wide**

Tarporley parish is of a size in terms of both population and the three churches that it warrants a ministry team consisting of the Rector, a curate and lay involvement. We also have an Associate Minister. The issue in having a curate is the provision and cost of housing, unless a locally living curate can be found, as at present.

A Parish Pastoral Team maintains contact with those in the Parish who welcome support after bereavement or in other circumstances. Communion can be offered at some of these visits.

There is an active Parish Reflection Group which meets most months in the home of a parishioner led by the Rector or Curate.

Home Lent groups and lent lunches are well supported due to the hospitality and generosity of members of the Parish.

Administrative support is provided by a parishioner's assistant on a part-time basis and will be available for at least the next year.

The parish finances are in relatively good shape. The Parish is able to pay its parish share each year and reports a small surplus after fund raising events. Also, there are some endowments administered by the Diocese which produce dividend income to supplement our day to day income.

The Churches had quinquennial inspections in 2017. As ever old church buildings require constant repair and expenditure. A report on the fabric is in the Annual Report 2019.

Previous incumbents have sometimes been chaplains to the High Sheriff of Cheshire. This is a personal appointment.

The PCC was constituted at the Annual Parochial Church meeting on 24 April 2017 at 17 elected members plus the Deanery Synod representatives, the 2 Churchwardens, the Rector and up to 3 co-opted members. PCC members are elected for three-year terms.

In 2017 the PCC adopted a governance structure which comprised, in addition to the existing Standing Committee, a Leadership and Mission Group (dealing with Mission, forms of worship involvement of lay members etc) but which has now been disbanded, a Resources Committee (dealing with property and financial matters) and a Compliance Team (dealing with Safeguarding, Health & Safety, Electoral Roll



etc). In addition, each Church has a committee with meetings attended by the Rector to deal with its own fund-raising and other matters. There is also a Fabric Committee which deals with St Helen's and the Done Room upkeep.

A Christian Giving Group was formed in 2018 to sponsor a Christian Stewardship exercise asking for input on both Time & Talents and Giving. This was followed by getting a card reader in church for digital donations, and a website based giving facility is under consideration.

The Parish has three members of the Malpas Deanery Synod House of Laity, one of whom serves as the Synod Treasurer. The clergy are members of the House of Clergy. For 2020 the Parish has been allocated four lay members of the Synod.

### **C. The New Incumbent**

The PCC is looking for someone who will inspire and continue to lead the Parish forward in its journey of faith and outreach. The current incumbent has attracted a curate (and has provided training and oversight) and has successfully promoted lay involvement in assisting with the chalice, leading intercessions and providing a pastoral support group, and has led successful courses and lectures, both during Lent and on other themes including the Bible. We wish this to continue and develop.

Messy Church has continued. Relations and involvement with the local schools are excellent. We wish this to continue and develop.

Rites of passage have been welcomed: baptisms and weddings have been warmly welcomed and funerals handled sensitively. Confirmation courses have led to over 40 people being confirmed over the past six years. We wish these efforts to continue.

## **D. Bibliography**

*Tarporley Parish Church – History and Guide* (unpublished; available in church)

### **Websites**

Housing and employment: [www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk)

Indices of Deprivation 2019 - Cheshire West and Chester Council:  
[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

School pupil numbers: [www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

Tarporley Church Location: [www.achurchnearyou.com/kml/parish\\_590103.kml](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/kml/parish_590103.kml)

Tarporley Parish Council website: <https://www.tarporley.org.uk/>

Tarporley Parish Churches website: [www.tarporleyparishchurch.org](http://www.tarporleyparishchurch.org)

[Tarporley Neighbourhood Plan 2010-30 https://www.tarporley.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Tarporley-Neighbourhood-Plan-Final-Adopted-Plan-March-2016.pdf](https://www.tarporley.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Tarporley-Neighbourhood-Plan-Final-Adopted-Plan-March-2016.pdf)