



ST BERTOLINE'S  
CHURCH

# BARTHOMLEY PARISH PROFILE

## ST BERTOLINE'S - WHY WE'RE HERE

That the community we serve may know that St Bertoline's is here to profess the faith, to celebrate it in worship and prayer, and to share it in fellowship so that we may say, "We would see Jesus".







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## OUR CHURCH

### SOME HISTORY (See guide booklet for more detail)

The parish church of **St Bertoline, Barthomley** is a historic grade 1 listed building built mostly in the late 15th to early 16th century. The oldest part of the church is an archway dating back to late 11th century when the Normans began the building in stone. Prior to this it is believed that there was a timbered structure on site in Saxon times. In modern times, the chancel was rebuilt in the early 1920s by the Crewe family. Until 1956, the church was the only one in the country dedicated to a little known 8th century saint from Staffordshire. If the church Visitors Book is to be believed, than the church is widely acclaimed as a beautiful and peaceful building.

There are some fine features in the church which are well described in the guide, but some are worth mentioning here. The 16th century altar with a fine carving depicting the Nativity Scene; the Crewe Chapel built in the early 17th century by Sir Ranulph Crewe, a brave man who, as Chief Justice of the King's Bench, defied Charles 1 (and kept his head) over levying war taxes; and the screen in the North Aisle dating back to the time of Elizabeth 1. In the tranquil setting of the tower porch, it is difficult to believe that it **marks the spot of a massacre in the Civil War**. Just before Christmas 1643, the Royalists came to Barthomley where some villagers took refuge in the church tower. They were smoked out by the Royalists who then murdered 17 of the villagers on the floor beneath the tower.

### SERVICES

There is a service every **Sunday morning** at 10.30. A Mattins service ( usually once monthly ) is followed by a Communion service on Sunday afternoon. A Communion service is held at All Saints, Balterley on Wednesday morning at 10.00. The services are generally viewed by the congregation as traditional high church.

For Barthomley, attendance has held up well with an **average of 45** for 2018, slightly up on the previous year. The age profile of the congregation is decidedly elderly. The majority of worshippers live outside the parish with some travelling cross country from as far away as Congleton on a regular basis. Most, however, reside in nearby Alsager. Sadly, attendance at All Saints Balterley is down to just a handful of stalwarts and the future of the church is currently under review. At St Bertoline's, there are additional services at Easter (Eucharist of the Last Supper, Last Hour at the Cross & Easter Vigil) and Christmas (Carol Service, Christingle & Midnight Mass) plus services for baptisms, funerals & marriages.

### CHOIR, ORGANISTS & BELLS

The excellent **robed choir and organists** contribute greatly to the quality of services at St Bertoline's. Unfortunately, the long serving Director of Music, retired at Easter and will be difficult to replace, but will continue singing with the choir. The church organ is a modern Makin electronic model having replaced the old pipe organ in 2006. There is a rota of **4 organists** for regular services who have played at St Bertoline's for many years. There is a ring of 8 bells with the oldest bell dating back to 1743. The bells were rehung in 1908 and the number increased from 6 to the present 8. The bells attract ringing teams from all over the country, but the bell captain is struggling with numbers to provide a regular peel on Sunday mornings. Practice night is Wednesday.







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## VOLUNTEERS

St Bertoline's has a **long tradition of volunteers** for a range of church activities but the cracks are beginning to appear and new younger volunteers need to come forward. The church is renowned for floral arrangements especially at Easter, **Harvest Festival** and Christmas and is fortunate to have the services of a large rota of flower ladies. Other rotas are in operation for sidepersons, readers, church cleaning and after service coffee and biscuits. The church yard team has been together for the best part of two decades but age is catching up and younger volunteers badly needed. Despite this, the churchyard is in excellent condition; it is also open for burials.

## SOCIAL EVENTS

For a small community, the church has quite an **active social programme** which contributes significantly to community spirit and PCC & charity finances. There are two lunches, Candlemas in February and St Bertoline's in September, Pancake Quiz, Easter Egg Hunt, Strawberry Tea in the Rectory Garden (weather permitting), Harvest Supper (with village hall), **Cheese & Wine** variations in October and a highly successful Christmas Fair in late November/early December.



## BUILDINGS

There are just two buildings, St Bertoline's church, Barthomley and All Saints church, Balterley. Both buildings are in **good condition**. The latest Quinquennial Inspection was in 2017 and there are no major items outstanding from this report. Two major projects currently in progress should be completed by early summer if not earlier. These are renovation of the large Moses & Aaron Paintings and replacing the lead stolen from the North Aisle roof with stainless steel.



At St Bertoline's, some **£420,000 plus** has been spent on major projects in the last decade. Some grants have been received including £70,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund but much of the funding for these projects has come from church reserves built up from **fund raising, donations** and bequests. The projects completed include stonework repair & repointing to exterior walls including the tower; complete electrical rewiring with new lighting and additional heating; tower porch renovation with new ceiling; Tower and footpath floodlighting; hand railing to steps in tower porch, Chancel/Nave & Pulpit; new floor in clergy vestry and an upgraded sound system.





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## FINANCES

The PCC finances are in a sound condition, although with no room for complacency, with monetary assets of £282,000 at the end of 2018. There are **58 donors in the Planned Giving Scheme** with two leaving and two new entrants last year. There is need to attract more entrants to offset anticipated leavers and to raise the average weekly giving of **£6.23**. The formula for contributing to Rectory expenses currently yields a quarterly lump sum of £520.00. All expenses directly attributable to the church are paid by the PCC including council tax and water rates on the Rectory.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Outside of church services and notice boards, the main direct communication channel with the parish is the **Parish News magazine** published 10 times annually. This currently has a print run of **300** and is distributed free throughout the parish. The magazine is fully funded by sponsorship with no advertisements. Online, the church has a website ([www.barthomleystbertolines.org.uk](http://www.barthomleystbertolines.org.uk)) with various links including **Facebook**.



## THE RECTORY

Barthomley Rectory was a new purpose built house constructed in 1971. It is set in its own grounds with extensive parking. There are four bedrooms, bathroom and shower room, large living room, modern kitchen and utility room. The office can be separated from the main living area. The whole house is warm and the oil central heating is very efficient.

The house is in good condition. There is a garage attached to the utility room. The garden is attractive and there is a pond. Fields surround the garden and the church is close by.

## THE PCC

The PCC is made up of Priest in Charge (chair), Assistant Priest in Charge (vice chair), 12 elected members, All Saints Balterley representative and two deanery synod representatives. The PCC meets **6 times a year**. The Church Officers meet 6 times a year in alternate months to the PCC and is represented by the PCC chair and vice chair, church warden, secretary and treasurer.





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## OUR PARISH

The parish of Barthomley lies in south east Cheshire on the border with Staffordshire. The benefice comprises largely the civil parishes of Barthomley (Cheshire) and Balterley (Staffordshire) and part of Englesea Brook (Cheshire) with a population of some 400+ souls. The population is predominately made up of commuting and retired families from the upper socio economic grades.

Barthomley, named in The Domesday Book as **Bertemleu**, is an ancient rural parish, which has resisted change. Much of the parish falls within the North Staffs Green Belt area. In addition, the centre of Barthomley village comes within a conservation area, a belt of land straddles the Radway Green & Audley Roads. These factors have restricted development in the past and are likely to do so in the future. Close by elsewhere there are huge (in comparison to pre development population) and ongoing housing projects in Alsager and Weston.

The landscape is mainly low level, undulating grassland dominated by dairy herds, beef cattle and sheep with some livery stables. The largest landowner is the **Duchy of Lancaster**. There has been some consolidation of farms into larger units leaving some empty homesteads but currently 7 tenanted farms remain. Some of these have diversified into other activities such as livery stables, clay pigeon shooting, fishing, quad biking and bed & breakfast.



At the heart of Barthomley village are located the church, the village pub and the village hall. The skyline is dominated by the magnificent medieval **St Bertoline's church** along with the well maintained church grounds. Although unattended, the church is open daily during daylight hours and is very popular with visitors combining a trip to the pub and church.

The picturesque thatched 17th century **White Lion Inn** is the hub of community social life. This is a traditional small village hostelry with spartan facilities, no TV or canned music but with good beer and food run by a local family. These types of pub are dying away but the White Lion remains a great attraction to visitors of all ages from the surrounding area.







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The **village hall** is a modern building with well equipped facilities including a kitchen. The hall is well used by local groups, the church for social activities, business meetings and families for parties.

The hall is fortunate to have reasonable off road parking, being able to share the church car parking facilities. **Barthomley WI** (94th year) continues to flourish with regular meetings in the village hall. Other active groups are the **Tea Set, Art Group and Yoga Classes**. A well established outdoor bowling club is located a short distance from the pub and is very popular during the summer.

There are a number of **attractive circular walks** starting in the village while the Two Saints Way route from Lichfield to Chester passes through the St Bertoline's car park and makes the church a popular staging post. There is a small walking group which meets weekly in the church car park.



There is no school, shop, post office, public transport or mobile library in the parish which makes **car owning essential**. The parish is well served by access to major roads with the M6 and A500 running through, both of these roads are currently being widened.

Unfortunately, minor but important access roads within the parish are in poor condition. The nearest mainline rail stations are **Alsager (3 miles) and Crewe (5 miles)**. The nearest shops and medical centres are **Alsager & Audley (4 miles)**. The nearest hospital is **Leighton, Crewe (7 miles)**.

## LOCATION & ROUTES

- 1) Road to Crewe (5 miles)
- 2) Main Road to Crewe from M6 roundabout (5 miles)
- 3) Road to Alsager (3 miles)
- 4) M6 Motorway Northbound

- 5) A500 road to Hanley (8 miles) & Stoke (10 miles)
- 6) M6 Motorway Southbound
- 7) Road to Audley (2.5 miles)







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## THE PRIEST WE NEED

### THE CHALLENGE

St Bertoline's relies heavily on elderly non-residents for finance and making up the congregation. Support from within the parish is much in the minority. This imbalance of support is potentially a very serious threat to the future of St Bertoline's.

The challenge is to widen support for the church from within the ecclesiastical parish, especially among young families, without alienating the existing largely elderly congregation some of whom travel a significant distance to worship at a traditional service.

### THE PRIEST IN CHARGE WE NEED

#### ESSENTIAL

Our parish is fully supportive of women's ministry. The new priest will need to be fully committed to:

1. Living and working in a scattered rural community with very limited public transport and the nearest shops some 3 miles away. Car ownership essential.
2. Church music and sustaining the choir.
3. Pastoral care especially the sick, the vulnerable and new residents in the community.
4. Maintaining the existing range of services while incorporating, if deemed necessary, new services to widen church support.
5. Church fund raising and social activities.

#### DESIRABLE

It would help greatly if the new priest in charge were to be good at:

1. Mixing with the community especially in the local inn which is the hub of village social life.
2. Communications especially to basic email IT level.
3. Public Speaking.
4. Singing with the choir.
5. Charing meetings.



### WHAT DOES ST BERTOLINES OFFER

1. The challenge is an opportunity to make a difference.
2. A comfortable rectory with open fields outlook in a peaceful & tranquil parish.
3. A dedicated group of volunteers.
4. A reasonable level of regular worshippers.
5. A community eager to meet & support their new Priest in Charge.
6. A church building that has been well maintained and free of major projects in the latest (2017) quinquennial report.





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### WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY THINK? SOME EXTRACTS FROM OUR QUESTIONNAIRE

'Barthomley church means a great deal to me. A caring community of friendship with Christian friends. I would like more popular and modern hymns – uplifting which would help bring in younger families. Also the clergy to be very approachable.'

'As well as worship, to us it ( the church ) means friendship and belonging to a community. ( The new priest ) to be interested in the choir – the choir is very important to us'

'The community of Barthomley is a very strong one and very supportive of each other in times of need. I used to go to church quite regularly. Some less formal services mixed in would in my view help and a Sunday school should help attract younger people... and the new priest to get 'out & about' and engage with non churchgoers not just the church goers.'

'We came to Barthomley in 1986 ....the church became a focal point enabling us to make friends we still have today. A new Priest in Charge ( should have ) the ability to 'meet & greet' all .... would be welcomed with open arms – as was our dear departing Canon Speedy and his Rev.Angela'

'...The church provides a constant centre for the village and wider parish. It holds the small community together ...'the 'house for duty' has worked very well for us and a Priest who lives amongst us is extremely helpful; easily available to contact if needed.I would welcome a 'people person' prepared to get to know the congregation and into village life. ....There is work to do and progress still to be made – even though great strides have been made with Darrel & Angela'

'The church is a haven of peace and tranquillity. We are custodians of a very important historic building. Love being involved, each and every one plays their part. (the new Priest should be) sociable and community minded, a good preacher, preferably takes a traditional service and is interested in young people'

