

# HIGHNAM BENEFICE PROFILE

THE PARISHES OF  
HIGHNAM,  
TAYNTON,  
TIBBERTON &  
RUDFORD



## INTRODUCTION

The United Benefice of Highnam, Rudford, Tibberton and Taynton was originally established in 1987. Although largely a series of rural parishes each has a distinct character; all varying, with Highnam being in part semi-suburban and Taynton being a deeply rural and scattered parish. After a difficult and lengthy interregnum between 2010 and 2015, our newly retired incumbent strengthened mission and outreach, introduced new directions in worship, built up a worship group, strengthened lay participation in our services, simplified Benefice administration and, above all, worked hard to unify the Benefice.

Arising from the impacts of Covid 19, the Benefice is now entering a period that exhibits a marked change in the life of our churches. The pattern of worship and outreach has been disrupted, and now is reconfiguring using the technology and options learned from 'lockdown'. This leads us to contemplate new models for Benefice Ministry to be guided and led by a new Priest in Charge. Bishop Rachel has recently launched a second phase of key strategic priorities for the Diocese (see Annex 1), and these must inevitably influence our interpretation and opportunities for growth in our rural ministry.



One major initiative has been to encourage stronger engagement with the local schools, toddler groups, and young families; and to secure, this we have a shared partnership in a full time Children's and Families worker which is proving to be very successful.

It is important also to stress that at this time for reconstruction, it is considered that the key identities, traditions and characteristics of the Benefice communities should continue to be reflected. This is seen as important as it offers a diversity of worship and mission opportunities that is capable of further development in the context of an enlarged Benefice.

Covid, combined with the current interregnum, has perforce of circumstance brought into focus some positives. It has drawn the Benefice closer together to work as one unit by the adoption of new technologies, the realisation that the context for mission has and is shifting; and finally in the prospect of a reshaped Benefice. The addition of Minsterworth to the Benefice "family" could bring about a new dimension to developing our exploration of creative expressions of faith, and in our outreach to our communities.





# HIGHNAM PARISH

HOLY INNOCENTS

Highnam parish has a population approaching 2,500, the majority being in a series of housing developments from the 1960's, enclosed by Oakridge, the road forming the eastern village boundary; with an outlying hamlet at Lassington and a smaller housing group at Over, which also includes a traveller settlement off the A40. The village has recently had 86 houses completed as a new development, with a further similar sized tranche about to be submitted for Planning permission.

The church of the Holy Innocents Highnam, lies on the edge of the village and was originally an estate church linked to the Highnam Court Estate. The church was commissioned by Sir Thomas Gambier Parry as a memorial to his wife and three children who died of tuberculosis. The church was consecrated in 1851 and is notable for its stunning frescoes. Hence it has an Historic England Grade 1 Listing.

Sir Hubert Parry, Thomas's son and notable C19th and early C20th composer, best remembered for the setting of Blake's poem Jerusalem, has early associations with this church and its music. As we move away from 'lockdown', this is an important stimulus to our reviving the church as a concert and cultural venue, as well as a tourist destination, which pre Covid attracted more than 2,700 visitors a year and with it, a significant income. The frescoes were cleaned in 1990, the organ refurbished in 2004; and toilet facilities, a servery and a light reordering were undertaken in 2015. The church is in good condition, with a Quinquennial inspection having been carried out in December 2021. A Faculty application has recently been submitted to create a new Garden of Remembrance as the churchyard experiences a steady stream of interments of ashes; and while we have a lesser number of burials, space is becoming critical. The PCC will need to address this in the foreseeable future.

The hamlet of Lassington to the north of Highnam, has the redundant Grade 2 tower of the early medieval church of St Oswald, now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. The rest of the Church was demolished in the 1970s. The churchyard remains open and has until recently been used for annual open air services.

Covid and the current vacancy has obviously disrupted the normal pattern of services. The decision was taken by the Benefice to rotate a Sunday eucharist between the four churches. This is augmented by a Monday Morning Prayer on Zoom, and a service of Morning Prayer in church on Wednesdays. The church continues to be very popular for weddings and baptisms, which can also benefit the three adjacent community halls. These are intensively booked for a whole range of community events, as well as educational programmes and institutional training.

The church hosts concerts by external choirs and other groups as the church has a good acoustic. The Carducci Quartet has held an annual festival here, and the Three Choirs Festival has held events when the festival year has been based in Gloucester. Within the church, the Benefice Choir is an important element of church life, and this has sustained a small music group throughout for live services. There is a strong wish to grow the range of range of musical experience within the church.

Prior to Covid, the church had a growing pastoral presence reaching out to an aging community, as well as the sick, and those in hospital. Just how this will be revitalised will also need to be carefully considered. There are active bible study and prayer groups now operational; and again, pre Covid, the Parish ran a very successful Alpha course.

There has been a strong link with the Highnam C.of E. Controlled Primary Academy. Our previous Priest in Charge working closely with our Children and Families worker, Owen Westall, developed this still further, with liaison and support from the headteacher and our church nominated school governor. The school regularly uses the church for making pupils familiar with the church festivals and traditions. Church volunteers have delivered regular weekly collective worship, produced online during the "lockdown"; and with Owen, introduced Open the Book, Active R.E. and an after school club. With the help of volunteers, Messy Church and Little Church meet on school premises. Aspects of this work are mirrored at Tibberton School .

The Friends of Highnam Church actively support the maintenance of the church and have helped fund the recent restoration and improvements. This has included repair to the frescoes, a sizeable contribution to the reordering and an improved access to the car park.



# HIGHNAM PARISH

HOLY INNOCENTS

# TAYNTON PARISH

ST LAWRENCE



Taynton is the peaceful and agricultural end of the Benefice running from the Glasshouse Inn almost on top of May Hill to the Red Brook, the boundary with Tibberton. The population of 185 mainly comprises farmers, and a mixture of business and professional people who mostly work in the Newent/Gloucester area. The village is famous for its show of daffodils in the Spring.

Farming is the main activity comprising dairy, beef, free-range egg production and sheep. There is also a recently established equestrian pre-training and eventing stable and a vineyard.

The age profile of the community is mixed, and many of the younger children in the Parish attend the local primary school in Tibberton or Newent Community School.

The church of St. Lawrence is a rarity being consecrated in 1660 and built on the order of Alderman Pury of Cromwell's Commonwealth Parliament to replace its predecessor, destroyed in the Civil War. A challenge for us is the repointing of areas of external and internal walls with lime putty, both as to locating a suitable contractor and establishing the cost.

In normal times there are usually two services a month, Eucharist and the only Evensong in the Benefice. Some of the Church's congregation are members of the Benefice Choir. We enjoy congregations of about 8 at routine services rising to 28/30 at the current monthly Benefice Services and up to 70 at many of the festivals including the annual Carol Service, Remembrance Sunday, Rogationtide and Harvest. There are 29 on our Electoral Roll

Music is important to us, and our Nicholson two manual organ is maintained by us and used by all three excellent organists drawn from across the Benefice as well as musicians taking advantage of the building's wonderful acoustics.

We are very strong supporters of Lay Ministry, and the work of the Benefice Youth Worker, Owen. As a church we are heavily integrated within the Benefice and the Community and also hold monthly coffee mornings around the homes of people within the Parish who are churchgoers and the wider community, as well as continuing to offer worship and pastoral support across the Parish. The church remains open for all 24/7.

The Parish of Holy Trinity with St Mary's Rudford was created in November 2018 and is situated about 5 miles from the Centre of Gloucester. The Parish has a single PCC and 2 Churches.



## TIBBERTON

The Village of Tibberton is the second largest village in the United Benefice of Highnam, Tibberton with Rudford and Taynton. A rural village with a population of 650. The houses in the village are predominantly privately owned with limited social housing. Currently any new housing is infill. There are a number of arable farms.

A Community Primary School and Nursery in Tibberton serves mainly the villages of Tibberton, Rudford and Taynton. The church has strong links with the school. An "Open the Book Team" lead weekly Assemblies. Prior to The Covid lock downs the church also organised an after-school club 8 times a year. The Benefice Children and Young Families worker has remained in contact with the school the last 18 months producing recorded Collective Worship.

The Church enjoyed a good working relationship with the Methodist Church over many years and has continued to do so since The Methodist Chapel closed in 2018. The remaining Methodists organise and lead a monthly service, "Together at Three" in the Church room and are members of the Open the Book Team as well as organising ecumenical Fellowship Groups.

The churches organised the First Open-Air service in 2000. This annual service has been held in the Tibberton Court Rose Garden and has continued to date. We welcomed Bishop Robert to lead the service this year. There is strong sense of community in in the village. Community Groups include Tuesday Club, Lunch at the Hall; The Four Village Choir; The History Group; Book Clubs; WI Groups in both Tibberton and Rudford and The Horticultural Society which organises an Annual Show in August. Church members take active roles in some of these groups.

Holy Trinity Parish Church stands on a ridge of higher ground next to Tibberton Court making it visible to all parts of the Village. It is a Grade 1 listed building. Many people visiting the church comment on the simple beauty of the building, Ramblers walking the Wysis Way often visit the church and enjoy their lunch in the churchyard.

Work has been undertaken by the PCC over several years to ensure the Church building is in good condition. Recent work has included moving the organ to the west end of the nave, updating the heating system and the creation of a children's area also at the West End of the Nave.

# TIBBERTON WITH RUDFORD

HOLY TRINITY  
& ST MARY'S

We have recently been granted a faculty to reorder the chancel which will involve removing the insignificant Victorian pews, levelling the floor, improving the lighting and heating and repointing the Norman Arch which separates the chancel and the nave. The whole area will also be carpeted. The reordering will enable the Chancel to be used more flexibly for worship and provide a meeting place for small groups.

Attendance at services pre-Covid Lockdowns was between 15 and 20 which increased at Festivals. It had been our intention to develop a more family-friendly Sunday Praise Service; again this ended up on the back burner due to Covid. A plan we hope to revive.

The parishes finances are secure at present.



## RUDFORD

The Village of Rudford runs along the B4215, 4 ½ miles north-west of Gloucester and 4 ½ miles south-east of Newent. There are several small roads running off the B4215 which are part of the village. There is a modern Village Hall which is at the bottom of Buttermilk Lane at which there is a market once a month, and which accomodates several other activities. There is also a thriving table tennis club next door to the hall.

The Church at Rudford is down one of the small roads, called Church Lane. The Church and School room are in a pretty quiet location quite close to the river Leadon. Rudford church is the smallest in the benefice and at present has a Wednesday Morning Communion once a month and one Sunday service. The site the church stands upon has probably been used for worship since 1200, but the church has its origins around the Norman Conquest. The church is a grade 1 Listed building, in good condition, having had two walls repointed in the last few years.



# TIBBERTON WITH RUDFORD

HOLY TRINITY  
& ST MARY'S

# RUDFORD RETREATS

The Church and former School Room at Rudford have been developed into a venue for day retreats. Rudford Retreats are run by visiting clergy and lay leaders and each day is shaped around giving people an opportunity to spend reflective time with God.

Our monthly quiet days are run on the third Thursday of the month and follow a pattern offering hospitality, worship and quiet reflection on scripture and sharing. The days are suitable for all: for those familiar with retreats, as well as those exploring such days for the first time.

Each retreat stands alone. Some people may wish to come occasionally and others more regularly. The programme of each day follows the same pattern, allowing us to be refreshed by the rhythm of prayer, fellowship and quietness.

See more at: <https://www.highnamchurch.org/rudford/>



## TIBBERTON WITH RUDFORD

HOLY TRINITY  
& ST MARY'S

# CHILDREN & FAMILIES WORK

OWEN WESTALL



Owen Westall joined the Benefice in 2019 as our Children & Families worker. His main focus is Schools work and supporting the parishes' family work. His appointment is shared and funded with our neighbouring Leadon Vale Benefice.

This ministry is to help build relationship with Church, school, and community but also to introduce Children, Youth and Families to Jesus and what a relationship with him might be like.

There have been strong links for many years with Highnam C of E Primary Academy and Tibberton Community Primary School. Our previous Priest in Charge, working closely with Owen, developed these links even further.

In the Highnam Benefice, there is strong liaison and support from both head teachers and the church-nominated school governors. The Church building has regularly been used by our schools for festivals like Christmas and Easter. During and post COVID lockdowns Owen has introduced 'Open the Book' into Highnam School, with Tibberton already having a team pre-pandemic. Online Collective worships are produced by a small team of volunteers and used in our schools every other week.

Owen also helps to support RE lessons through sports ministry 'Active RE' alongside Sportily. 'Messy Church', "For the King" (After school sports club) and 'Little Church" (Parents and Toddlers), all with the help of Church volunteers, are a big part of the Church connecting with the community, school, and exploration of faith.

Owen also shares his time with the Leadon Vale benefice, working with 4 primary schools and 9 parishes, similar work is being done there. However, Owen has recently started to develop youth work and is hoping that this can also be done in the Highnam Benefice. Owen is involved in a really exciting ministry and we are excited to see the impact it has on the lives of those in our community.

Owen is employed Monday - Friday and is a member of a Church Fellowship in Gloucester City centre.



# TEAM

ADMIN  
& MINISTRY

## ADMINISTRATOR

Until February 2022 Lynda Haines has been our part-time benefice administrator. Called to a new role, the position will be vacant, but it's currently the intention to fill this essential role as soon as we can.



## WORSHIP TEAM

During the vacancy we have created a Worship Coordination team comprising Janet Hogg (Worship Coordinator) and the Revds Philippa Brunt and Geoff Crago (Retired Clergy with PTO) who are ably supported by a team of Lay Worship Leaders.

This team has planned worship, coordinated outside clergy assistance and particularly during the pandemic and lockdowns has promoted and organised our Zoom and Youtube services.

