

Saint Cuthbert's



Bewcastle

Hill farming is predominant, with sheep and cattle for meat production, including fine herds of Galloway and Charolais. Some of the population commute to nearby towns, whilst others take advantage of broadband to work from home. The dwellings are scattered across 40 square miles, and it is quite common for neighbours to be more than half a mile apart, albeit in recent times two small concentrations of housing have been established at Roadhead and Sleetbeck.



Winter can sometimes produce heavy snow falls, where drifting can block the roads, though fortunately this is rare.

Tourism is growing, with guesthouses and self-catering throughout the area. Others earn a living from arts and crafts, a stud farm, pony schools, a creative learning centre, bee keeping and gardening services.



The people are friendly, helpful without being nose-y, and quick to respond when adversity threatens (like the foot and mouth disease in 2001). Total population is thought to be in the region of 450.

The nearest shops are in Brampton (11 miles) and over the Scottish border to Newcastleton (10 miles). The post office is close to the church in a front room, the well-equipped village hall at Roadhead has frequent events/concerts and the nearest pubs are in the neighbouring Stapleton parish. Public transport is absent, apart from the school buses serving the secondary schools in at Brampton and Longtown.

Bewcastle School provides primary education for the children in the parish. With fewer than 30 pupils (plus a new pre-school) it has a caring family atmosphere. We are fortunate that, although not being a church school, the Headteacher has fostered close links with the church. The previous rector was invited to take a weekly assembly and both the PCC and Headteacher are keen for this to continue.

News usually passes amongst the community faster than the RAF's low flying jets, but to supplement it a local booklet is produced free of charge called the 'Bit of Crack.' While not an instrument of the church, we are able to use it as a means of publicity.

Local societies include the Bewcastle Heritage Society, which collects local knowledge and legends, publishing periodical booklets on the findings.



The Church

Our Bewcastle Cross suggests that there may have been a place of worship as far back as the 7th century. The earliest recorded church was 1277, and the present configuration owes much to the Victorians. While work is needed to maintain the integrity of the building, this is in hand, and money has been set aside for much of the work. Our finances are sound, and we pay our full quota. Accounts for 2005/2006 are attached.

The Congregation

The regular congregation at presents consists of families with young children, couples and individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds. Whilst a few are from families that have lived in the area for many generations, there are many 'off-comers' from all parts of Britain, some retired but many economically active in a wide variety of occupations.

Churchmanship varies within the congregation but there is respect for each tradition and the range of services is reflective of this. Both the Book of Common Prayer and Common Worship are in use. Congregation size varies from 8 to 20, although major events such as Christmas, Easter, Remembrance and Harvest Festival can see 50 or more. Capacity would be 150 (at a squeeze!). Owing to the distances involved, some members are from the Askerton part of the Lanercost Parish (including 3 on the PCC).



On the Electoral Roll there are 30. Over the past year the church has seen 4 funerals, 4 baptisms and 1 reaffirmation of wedding vows. The PCC have discussed new initiatives to increase congregation numbers and would be keen to support realistic attempts by the new rector to reach out to the currently non-attending local population.

There is normally one service each Sunday, morning or evening, and this is supported by two retired clergy and two lay readers within the benefice. The past pattern of services can be viewed at www.bewcastle.com/newslet.htm where copies of the Benefice News are available. A recent introduction is the family service, and this has increased the number of children in the congregation.

There is also a United Reform Church nearby at the Knowe, where services are held once a month.

Main activities & events

In addition to church festivals, we also hold a number of events during the year, the main one being the Bewcastle Show, a traditional rural get-together with crafts, tea tent, tug of war, pony events, terrier racing and hound trailing. This year, despite scattered showers of biblical proportions, we raised £1,800.



The Summer Fair and Strawberry Tea in Roadhead Hall included bric-a-brac, craft, local produce and games. It was well attended this year, raising £880.

Harvest Festival Supper is on the Monday after Harvest Festival, a pie and peas, bring your own plates do. It is followed by an auction of produce, and this years drew in 85 people.

These popular events illustrate well the support and goodwill received by Bewcastle Church from the local population. The gatherings bring together regular, occasional and non-church attendees and reinforce the importance of the church in the local community.

Under the previous incumbent a flourishing Junior Christians (JC) club was attracting increasing numbers of children. During the interregnum this has been suspended, but it is hoped that things will continue after the new recruitment (that's you!).

A local scout group meets regularly, and always attend the Remembrance Service at Bewcastle.

