

Thatcham Team Ministry

St Mary's and St Barnabas Churches



Inspired by the love of Christ to build God's Kingdom

Parish Profile 2011

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Introduction

The Archdeacon of Berkshire writes: -

The Diocese of Oxford covers three counties and has an Area System which generally works well. Most episcopal functions in Berkshire have for many years been formally delegated to the Bishop of Reading. Bishop Stephen Cottrell has recently moved to Chelmsford and the churches generally are in good heart as we await the arrival of his successor.

The Diocese has adopted a Living Faith mission strategy which is explained on the Diocesan website. In Thatcham, church life has become increasingly vibrant and outward facing over recent years. The new Team Rector will inherit a good foundation as he/she addresses the considerable opportunities for growth and development.

The Venerable Norman Russell

The Area Dean writes: -

Newbury Deanery

The Newbury Deanery consists of 38 parishes; it is situated at the western end of Berkshire, bounded to the north by the Ridgeway, to the west by Wiltshire and Salisbury Plain, to the south by Hampshire and to the east by the Bradfield Deanery. The parishes of the Deanery are grouped into four clusters; Thatcham and the Hermitage Team, consisting of seven rural parishes to the north of Thatcham, form a cluster and share an annual confirmation service. The deanery has some 90,000 residents, more than 60,000 of whom live in the urban areas of Newbury and Thatcham. The population of the rural area is scattered on the chalk Downlands in a series of villages and the small town of Hungerford. In recent years the main housing development has been concentrated within and on land adjoining the urban areas of Newbury, Thatcham, Greenham, Speen and Shaw.

The locating of Vodafone's international headquarters on the edge of Newbury, together with a number of other multinational companies, means that Newbury area is an attractive place in terms of work opportunities.

The Deanery is bisected north-south by the A34 and east-west by the M4 and is served by a main east-west railway line linking it to Reading and London and the West Country.

The Reverend Rita Ball

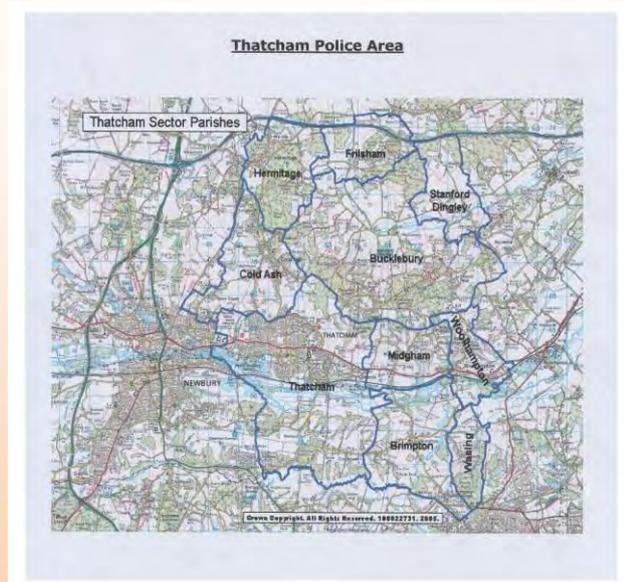
Introducing Thatcham

Thatcham is on the A4, three miles east of Newbury. The town lies in the valley of the River Kennet with areas of beautiful countryside within easy reach. The settlement predates Newbury, but until the mid-60s it remained a village of some 5,000 people. Housing development since that time has expanded the village into a town of over 25,000 people – almost the same size as Newbury. There is easy access to the M4 and M3 with good rail links to London Paddington.

Economic recession has affected Thatcham less than many other areas in the country. It is a key settlement in West Berkshire, benefiting from a good skill base and transport links. Together with Newbury it has attracted a number of major employers. Service and support industries saw major growth in the ten years to 2007. Generally, premises are available to meet most modern business and investment requirements.

The risk areas, particularly since 2007, are a relative dependence on financial, insurance and banking sectors, an aging population and difficulties in obtaining affordable housing, particularly for key workers. Unemployment rates are low relative to the UK, but there are pockets of under and unemployment, social deprivation, unskilled long term unemployment and hardship.

Events such as the annual Festival of Arts and Leisure serve to bring the community together, but the provision of community facilities in Thatcham to meet the increasing needs of the population remains an issue. There are two supermarkets and a weekly market, but a number of small retail units which once served the people of Thatcham currently lie empty or have become charity shops and fast food outlets. Projects are underway to improve the appearance of the town centre, but attempts to revitalise the area as a shopping centre have yet to show any marked effect.



Housing

The Rectory, situated opposite the church, enjoys the benefit of a large, well established garden. It has 4 bedrooms, lounge, separate dining room, study, downstairs cloakroom and utility room. There is also a double garage. However, the 1960s building is beginning to show signs of wear and tear.

The Diocese is hoping that a proposal to redevelop the site which would include a new Rectory, conforming to the standards of the Church Commissioners' Green Guide, will in the near future go ahead. There is alternative accommodation the Diocese owns available near to the church, while this plan is completed.



Kennet School



The Rectory

Schools

In the town there are several pre-schools and nurseries. There are 6 primary schools, including the Thatcham Park C of E School. The majority of secondary pupils, including Y12 and 13 (6th form), attend Kennet School. There are other secondary schools within reach of the town.

Leisure Facilities

The Kennet Leisure Centre, adjacent to the school, offers a range of sporting activities. Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre with lake and reed beds is popular with residents. Local clubs and organisations include the Girl Guiding and Scouting movements with many groups in Thatcham, Youth and Community Centre, U3A, Thatcham Historical Society, WI and many others. There is also a local library.

For further details of schools and leisure facilities, please see the list of websites on page 16.



Kennet Leisure Centre



Introducing St Mary's & St Barnabas

There has been a church on the site of St Mary's for over 1000 years. As the parish church it aims to serve not only the congregation but also the residents of the town. The church is normally kept open during daylight hours. It is in the middle of the town and attracts people who like a traditional Parish Communion style of liturgy. Worship is almost entirely Common Worship and there is a good choir and a well-known bell ringing team both of whom do much to enhance the quality of services. Recently it has become more central but still with an emphasis on Eucharistic worship. Recent developments in worship have followed much of the thinking laid out in the "Mission-shaped Church" report with informal and experimental services being held at different times of the week.

In June 2006 a new Church plant called St Barnabas was created and meets in Thatcham Park Church of England primary school which is situated in north Thatcham. It serves the school throughout the week with an emphasis on reaching the local community around the school and the large Dunston Park estate nearby. Worship here is much less formal with a variety of worship styles. The church has a strap line of „serving to build community“ made from the letters of St Barnabas Church, (STBC). Once every two months the church does not meet on a Sunday and instead meets on a Saturday from 4.30pm until 6.00pm to hold what is called SoS, Sunday on Saturday. This is a form of „Messy Church“ and we have welcomed several other churches wanting to reflect how they too may reach those who are more on the fringes of church life.

The Anglican churches of Thatcham have very good relations with the other denominations in the town and working collaboratively with the ministers of the other churches of the town is seen as crucial. The parish is developing its contacts with the local town council and community groups. Thatcham is one of those parishes where there are endless possibilities for Christian ministry. In the last few years there has been an emphasis on working with the local schools and nursing homes. The new West Berkshire Community hospital is also sited in the parish.

At present the staff of the team ministry is a Team Rector (vacant), one Team Vicar, two curates and an administrator. At the time of writing the parish is investigating the possibility of employing a youth worker to the team. The team meets for Morning Prayer and has a weekly staff meeting. There is an emphasis on teamwork within the whole parish. The members of staff in the team ministry share the occasional offices between them and plan the overall worship pattern and activities of the parish together, although the Team Vicar is responsible for the day to day life of St Barnabas. Worship is also shared at times with the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church.

Thatcham is a very busy parish and requires much energy to sustain its exciting opportunities. There is a huge ministry to people who come for the occasional offices and we seek to take that as an opportunity and not a problem. The potential for growth is enormous which makes the future seem both daunting and exciting. Whatever happens it is never dull!!



Mission and growth

In 2005 we compiled a Family roll which holds information additional to that of the Electoral roll. In 2007 all on the Family roll from St Mary's and the recently established St Barnabas were invited to a Parish Weekend away to enable people to get to know each other and explore „what is community?“.

Following this four Emmaus home groups were established. As we wanted to continue to look at mission, in October 2008 we initiated a stewardship programme entitled „Giving in Grace“, using some of the material from the Liverpool diocese.

A second weekend away in March 2009 enabled the two churches to reflect on progress and explore further their vision of mission. „Making Connections“, a mission initiative was held for a week in November 2009. During this week a range of activities was organised in the parish and the congregation were encouraged to invite non churchgoers to participate. A subsequent Alpha course led to a number of people preparing for confirmation.

For some years the Deanery has seen Thatcham as a place of mission and has assisted us by subsidising the parish share from the other churches in the Deanery. Although we reach the agreed share amount each year, we are working towards being able to fully support the amount ourselves by 2012. For 2011 our element of this share is set at £78,000.

Groups & activities linked to the Thatcham Team

ABC

Meeting at 10.30am Wednesday mornings in St Mary's, ABC is our church for babies and toddlers, who are of course very welcome to bring their families, friends and carers too! It's a large group but very friendly and of course rather noisy...

We meet up to chat over a drink and a biscuit while the children play with toys. At about 11.30am we have a short service with action songs, a Bible story and prayers – we then march around the church playing our musical instruments.

Barfield Handbell ringers

Barfield Handbell Ringers were early members of The Handbell Ringers of Great Britain. In accordance with the objectives of this registered charity, they seek to cultivate the art of tune ringing on hand bells. The group practises on Monday evenings in St Mary's and performs at concerts, festivals and other occasions throughout the year.

Bell tower

There is a long tradition of both towerbell ringing and handbell ringing at St. Mary's Church. Adults and children from the age of 12 can learn the art of bell ringing and hand bell ringing. St. Mary's is well known for its peal of ten bells that are rung for Sunday Services and some weddings. Methods are rung according to the skill of the group assembled. Our friendly group of ringers meets to practise every Tuesday at 7:30pm throughout the year.

Children's groups & Pathfinders

During Sunday services at St Mary's provision is made for two children's groups; one for children of Primary school age and one for young people from 11 to 14. The latter is the Pathfinders group which has its own room upstairs with a sofa and beanbags where young people can share their faith in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. The younger group holds its varied activities in the spacious meeting room at the back of the church building. The groups are held during the 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays of the month at the 10.00 am service. On the third Sunday the groups combine for a bible-based workshop, consisting of a story followed by craft activities, which is enjoyed by children and young people of all ages. The groups are supported by a small team of enthusiastic leaders, willing helpers and are overseen by our children's work coordinator.

Emmaus Home groups

We have three home-groups – we call them Emmaus Groups because the groups started by following material from the Emmaus Course. The groups are informal and friendly – and no previous experience or knowledge is required! The idea is to share thoughts and insights in response to a Bible passage or an issue to do with faith and life.

Little churches

Members of St Mary's and St Barnabas church provide Holy Communion services on a regular basis at many of the complexes for the elderly and infirm in and around Thatcham. These complexes vary from warden-controlled residences to care homes for the totally dependent. Many of the elderly grew up as regular church attendees, and so it is much appreciated that they are still able to worship regularly with others. At these „Little Churches“ there may be 2 or 3, or 22 or 23 people worshipping together regularly. It is not just the clergy from the church visiting, it is the church going out into the community.

Men's Breakfast

On the first Saturday of the month, the men's breakfast starts at 8:30 am at the Regency Park Hotel. These are very friendly gatherings. Coffee, toast and croissants (plus optional extra bacon butty) create a convivial atmosphere. And a thought-provoking talk from a guest speaker usually gets a good discussion going. Previous speakers include the Bishop of Reading, local businessmen, clergy of all denominations, representatives from organisations such as The Bible Society and our Member of Parliament.

Mothers Union

We are a group of Mothers' Union members in Thatcham who meet together most months. We are members primarily to support the work of MU, a worldwide fellowship of Christians committed to caring for families. We meet to share friendship, to pray together and to learn about MU activities and ways in which we can care for others. Our meetings take place on a Wednesday afternoon (usually the fourth Wednesday of the month) and three times a year we meet in the evening. Meetings are open for anyone, men as well as women. Membership is open to anyone baptised. The monthly meetings are held in the meeting room unless otherwise stated. Members also help in different ways in the community – at mother and toddler clubs, supporting those who are baptised at St Mary's, fundraising for MU work worldwide, parenting courses and in many personal or individual ways.

Pathfinder Plus

Pathfinder Plus has existed for over ten years. This is a group for young people in school year 9 and above who meet socially twice a month on a Sunday evening to discover more about the Christian faith. Through discussion groups, drama, watching videos and listening to creative talks many have gone on to confirmation and play an active role in the life of the church. For the last 7 years they have also attended Soul Survivor, the summer Christian festival in Shepton Mallet.

Sewing Group

In 1998 a small group of friends decided to get together and mark the millennium by creating a new altar frontal for the Chapel. This was so successful that the group then continued, making and mending other items for use in the Church. Projects have included vestments, banners and other altar frontals. Anyone with sewing or embroidery skills is welcomed to join this group.

SOS

Sunday on Saturday, known as SoS, meets alternate months on the second Saturday of that month at St Barnabas church and begins at 4.30pm with craft and play activities e.g. making necklaces, building dens and shelters, assembling flower arrangements, using play dough, icing biscuits and all sorts of other things depending on the theme. Activities are not only for children - adults join in too. Just after 5pm we break for food like hotdogs, fish fingers or chilli (not forgetting cakes and yummy sweet things too!) The session ends with a service where we sing, pray and share together about the things we have made, aiming to finish for 6 o'clock.

Thatcham Good Life

St Mary's Church has strong links with „Thatcham Good Life“, a group of people living in or around Thatcham in West Berkshire who are concerned about the warming of the planet due to CO2 emissions.

The Beat

In 2006 we created an initiative jointly with the Methodist church in Thatcham to reach out in mission to the young people in the community, by creating an open style youth club. This started with 18 young people and now due to its popularity reaches over 200 11 – 18 year olds, with an average attendance of between 60 and 85 most Friday nights. The Beat meets from 7pm to 9pm in term time only and has a range of authorised volunteer youth leaders from both the Anglican and Methodist churches. We have a wide range of resources thanks to the generosity of various companies and charities; we were selected to be the beneficiaries of the Mayor's charity in 2009.



Current Service Structures

St Mary's Church Services

Sunday

8am Holy Communion (CW)

10am Morning Services (CW)

1 st Sunday	Parish Communion, music group, baptism welcome
2 nd Sunday	Parish Communion, choir and children's groups
3 rd Sunday	Parish Communion, choir, children's workshop
4 th Sunday	Parish Communion, choir and children's groups
5 th Sunday	Parish Communion, choir and children's groups

Uniformed organisations join us for special services during the year

6.30pm Evening services

1 st Sunday	Sung Evensong (BCP)
2 nd Sunday	Occasional youth led services
4 th Sunday	Healing Service
5 th Sunday	Varied

Pathfinder Plus youth group meets twice monthly on a Sunday evening for school year 9 and above.

Wednesday

9.45am Holy Communion (CW)
10.30am ABC (Adults, Babies and Children)

Every Weekday

9 or 9.15am Morning Prayer

St Barnabas Church Services

10am Morning Services

1 st Sunday	Worship Service
2 nd Sunday*	Communion (CW), with children's groups
3 rd Sunday	All Age Worship Parade Service
4 th Sunday	Communion (CW), with children's groups
5 th Sunday	Worship Service

*On alternate months on the second Saturday from 4.30-6.00pm SoS (Messy Church) replaces the Sunday service for that week.

Occasional Services

The occasional offices statistics fluctuate from year to year. However as a guide to the frequency of the services taken, in 2010 we conducted 124 Baptisms, 32 Weddings, and 62 Funerals. In addition there were 7 Confirmations.

Electoral roll, usual Sunday attendance figures and database

At the 2010 APCM 179 names were on the Electoral roll from St Mary's and St Barnabas. The usual Sunday attendance figures for 2010 for St Mary's were 85 and for St Barnabas 29. At Easter 2010 this was 220 and at Christmas 2010 this was 384, at St Mary's. We also have a database known as the family roll showing the local people we are often in contact with and including the electoral roll totals approximately 350 people.

Children and Communion Policy

Following its nurture programme for young people, the parish of Thatcham has seen the admission of children to communion as one of its central features. Children are seen to be fellow pilgrims on the journey of faith and are nurtured through all stages of that journey. Usually at the age of seven (or earlier if that is seen to be good for the child's development) the children are prepared for Holy Communion and admitted at a ceremony on Advent Sunday. The parish sees baptism as the entry into full membership of the church community and communion is therefore offered to all who have been baptised.

Second Marriage Policy

The PCC has agreed to the marriage of divorced people under the bishops' guidelines with a process of appropriate pastoral care.

Child Protection Policy

The PCC has fully implemented the policy for the well being of both children and vulnerable adults based upon the diocesan guidelines. All children and youth leaders have been approved by the PCC and have completed CRB checks as recommended. This is kept under review with national guidelines.



Churches Together In Thatcham (CTIT)

For a large number of years the churches in Thatcham has been part of Churches Together, both in Berkshire and nationally. In Thatcham this group consists of St Mary's, St Barnabas, Thatcham Baptist, Thatcham Methodist Church, Our Lady of the Assumption Roman Catholic and the United Reformed Church. The ministers meet together each month for prayer, reflection, support and share planning for upcoming activities. An executive committee plans joint activities and services alongside advertising Christmas and Easter to the local community.

Existing schools links

As part of the work of Churches Together In Thatcham, the local schools are visited by ministers from the local churches and have a link minister who pastorally cares for them. Alongside this they lead assemblies and occasional lessons within the schools. Some of the local schools visit the churches either for historic visits or other curriculum based talks and hold Harvest, Easter or Christmas services in the churches.

School Head Teacher links

Twice a year a lunch is provided for all the Head Teachers of the Infant, Primary and Junior schools to come together with all the ministers of Thatcham. This gives ministers an opportunity to offer support and to listen to their concerns. It is an opportunity to look ahead and also see how the church may better support these schools.

Douai Abbey day

One of the annual events is helping to prepare children to move from year 6 up to year 7. This is a special leavers" day at Douai Abbey. This draws together all the different schools to celebrate good endings and form new friendships for the future.



Thatcham Team Ministry: -

The post of Team Rector.

This is a key appointment not only for the two churches, but also for the local community.

The Team Rector is required to be an ex-officio member of: -

Thatcham Park CE school governors as foundation Governor
Thatcham Parochial Charities
Thatcham Park School Trust (Sir William Mount Trust) Trustee
The Lady Frances Winchcombe Foundation

The Past Decade in the Parish

Amongst others, four developments are worthy of note: -

- the campaign to make the St Mary's building „a church fit for the 21st century“. This has involved the reordering of the chapel, new doors and flooring to the meeting room at the back of the church, increased disabled access, redecoration of the church, replacement of some worn pews with chairs, plus new heating, lighting and sound systems
- the establishment of St Barnabas, based in Thatcham Park Church of England School
- the continued growth of house groups following on from Alpha and Emmaus courses and two Parish weekends
- from within our congregations four lay people have been called to the priesthood and several of those have been trained under the local diocesan training scheme. In addition, several newly ordained people have benefitted from serving their first curacy with us

The future

We are looking for a new Team Rector to build on our achievements so far and to lead us forward into the next phase of our development – a Rector for the 21st century!

All parishioners were invited to complete a questionnaire, indicating how we should like our churches to move forward. From this three main priorities have emerged: -

- to develop our mission and promote the church as a communal focus for the town
- to develop and support the spiritual growth of people of all ages and their involvement in all areas of ministry
- to further the existing work of our outreach to children and young people

The questionnaire also asked us to describe the qualities we would hope for in our new Team Rector in order to achieve our priorities. Among these are the following: -

- a prayerful person of God
- good communication skills
- good organisational skills
- enabler of laity
- appreciative of, and able to work with, a range of church traditions
- willingness to work ecumenically
- confident in the use of modern communication and technology media
- good work life balance
- visionary
- pastoral skills
- willing to work collaboratively
- willingness and ability to engage with the wider community

Recent incumbents have been asked by the bishop to train curates and it is hoped that this will continue.

With the new guidelines for working across the Church of England the post of Team Rector will conform to the regulations of the new Common Tenure.

The post of Team Rector is supported by other colleagues in the team.

Parish Administrator

The parish administrator currently works for 7 hours per week with the office open on Monday and Friday mornings. With voluntary overtime this enables basic administration to be carried out, but there is insufficient time to meet all the demands which arise in a busy parish. This is an issue which the new Rector will need to address.

Youth worker

We have recently appointed a youth worker who will be responsible for co-ordinating the work of the Beat and for outreach to teenagers in the town. He will also help in the overall running of the parish by carrying out tasks such as the updating of the Family Roll. This is a temporary appointment until the end of August 2011.

Team Vicar

In association with the Team Rector the Team Vicar oversees the overall mission of the Church in Thatcham, taking an active role in the day to day services and occasional offices. The Team Vicar has special responsibility for the life and mission of St Barnabas Church.

The Team Vicar also has special responsibility for the following key areas: -

- Thatcham Park School and its community
- Kennet Secondary School and its community
- Young people of the parish
- Other areas as agreed within the team

The Team Vicar currently also works in the wider community of Thatcham.

Two Curates

Each of our curates has come from within the congregation of St Mary's Thatcham and trained on the local Oxford training course as non-deployable, non-stipendiary Priests. They have a variety of experiences that they bring from the workplace and understand the local community extremely well. They are both very valuable members of the staff team and are highly respected in their various roles. Within the two churches each has specific areas of responsibility.

One of them covers the following areas of ministry: -

- ABC
- SoS
- Children's work
- The prayer ministry team
- St Barnabas church
- CRB
- Admission to Communion

The other covers

- The Little Churches and those who administer communion to the residents
- The Mothers Union
- The Healing service
- A Quiet prayer group (Julian style)
- A Time to Remember service, held on the nearest Sunday to All Souls Day
- St Mary's church

Useful web links

Oxford Diocese

<http://www.oxford.anglican.org/>

St Mary's Church

<http://www.stmarysthattham.org.uk>

<http://www.achurchnearyou.com/venue.php?V=323>

St Barnabas Church

<http://www.stbarnabasthattham.org.uk/>

<http://www.achurchnearyou.com/venue-6134/>

History of St Mary's building and Thatcham

<http://www.berkshirehistory.com/villages/thatcham.html>

<http://www.thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk/main/index.html>

Churches Together In Thatcham (CTIT)

<http://www.ctit.org.uk>

Thatcham Park CE School

<http://www.westberks.org/GroupHomepage.asp?GroupID=5165>

Kennet School

<http://www.kennet.westberks.org>

Trinity School

<http://www.trinitypac.org>

West Berkshire Council

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk>

Thatcham Town Council

<http://www.thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk/main/index.html>

Kennet Leisure Centre

<http://www.leisurecentre.com/centres/28/home/Kennet-Leisure-Centre.aspx>

Up my street

<http://www.upmystreet.org.uk/l/thatcham.html>

Uniformed organisations in Thatcham

Scouts and Beavers

<http://www.1st-thatcham.org.uk/dartmoor.htm>

Thatcham Good Life

<http://www.thatchamgoodlife.org.uk/index.html>