



## DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE

### PATRONAGE (BENEFICES) MEASURE 1986

Parish of

#### **Statement prepared by the P.C.C. describing the Church's ministry and mission within the parish**

##### **1. The Local Community**

Branxton is a small Parish comprising Branxton village and surrounding, scattered farm based communities. Farming is the main industry in the parish, some small businesses also operate. Many residents travel outside the parish to work. The population is a mixture of families and retirees. There are approximately 20 children in the village. There is very little ethnic mix in the population; it is a low income area with limited job opportunities and high travel costs. There is a village hall.

Cornhill village, which is one mile from the Scottish border, has a population of +/- 300 people, with a further 150-200 living in outlying farms and hamlets. This is a splendid rural community set in the prettiest countryside in the United Kingdom. The village has a well-known and hugely popular shop, which attracts people from far and wide. The family that runs it is energetic and outward looking. They have a Post Office and a small coffee shop, which also provides internet access. There is a strong sense of community spirit, which is further amplified by the Collingwood Arms, a hotel and restaurant which has been fully refurbished. There is a village hall. The village school closed in 2012 because of falling numbers of students. The Parish Council is exploring the possibility of an asset transfer from the County Council to the Parish Council, with a view to developing the school site as a community resource to complement the village hall.

Carham Parish is a scattered, very rural community. There are two villages in the parish: Carham is a small hamlet of 10 houses, mostly rented; Wark is a community of about 50 houses. Neither village has a shop, post office, pub, school or village hall. The rest of the parish is made up of about 15 farms of various sizes. The parish has about 300 inhabitants, of which about a third live closer to and look to the neighbouring churches of Cornhill, Branxton and Kirknewton.

Children from the parishes mostly attend Ford School, about four miles away. There is a secondary school at Berwick, about 15 miles away, but children often go to Alnwick, about 30 miles away, because of the poor reputation of Berwick Academy.

In all three Parishes, the land is mostly good to moderate arable land with a proportion of permanent grassland supporting sheep and cattle. The River Tweed is renowned as a superlative salmon fishing river with an international reputation for its ecological management. The area benefits from low rainfall (the hills round the Tweed valley create an effective rain shadow) – comparable to East Anglia without being quite as warm!

The three Parishes are only about an hour by car from Edinburgh and Newcastle and London is 4 hours by train from Berwick.

##### **2. The Church Community**

At Branxton the congregation at St.Paul's is predominantly middle aged and older. 40% live outside the parish. Attendance varies according to the type of service, with 6-12 people for the Sunday morning service and 40-50 for special services.

Cornhill Church has had an average congregation of 11 people for the past 150 years. They do well on high days and holidays, with 30-40 people attending worship at Easter, and more than 200 attending the ‘must do’ Christmas carol celebration, which has been run by the congregation for many years. Unsurprisingly, the congregation is elderly.

Carham Parish Church – St. Cuthbert’s – has a regular attendance of 7 to 12 at its fortnightly service. These are all of a higher age group.

### 3. Statistics

	Branxton	Cornhill	Carham
Population	130	450	300
Electoral role	20 (50% non resident)	22	18
Av Sunday Communicants	8	11	5
Av Sunday attendance	9	13	10
Av Sunday Baptisms per annum	0-1	0-1	0
Av Conformations per annum	0	0	0
Av weddings per annum	0-1	1-2	0-1
Av funerals per annum	4	4	1
Av house Communicants	0	2	0

### 4. Church Buildings

St. Paul’s Branxton is a small church with seating for 70 people.

A church is documented as being on the site in 1195; the building seen today dates from alterations carried out in 1849. The interior of the church was redecorated in 2012 and the upper section of the tower re-pointed in 2013. New inner entrance doors made from local oak with etched glass panels were made to commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Flodden in 1513.

St Helen's, Cornhill, is on the site of an ancient seat of worship. It was enlarged and modernised in the late 1830s to provide seating for some 200 people. The congregation removed some of the pews about fifteen years ago to provide space for other activities. We meet and have coffee here before the service, and hold fund-raising coffee mornings inside the church. We have also hosted concerts, recitals, flower shows and art exhibitions.

St.Cuthbert’s at Carham is a stone building dating from the 1780s, with additions in the 1860s. It has a capacity of about 110 in box pews. It is an ancient site of worship, granted to St. Cuthbert in 675. The church has recently been enhanced with interpretation boards on the inside and outside, concerning the history of the area, the church building and the link with St Cuthbert.

No additional church buildings exist in Branxton, but there is an excellent village hall which is used for PCC meetings and our annual Harvest Festival meal.

Cornhill likewise has a village hall, so there is no Church hall.

At Carham there is no Church hall although the rear of the church is used for PCC and Parish

council meetings and as a polling station for elections.

In Branxton the old churchyard surrounding the church is now closed and is maintained by Northumberland County Council. A new churchyard was opened in 1950, opposite the church and this is maintained by the PCC. A car park opposite St Paul's has recently been installed to help with Church parking and to further accommodate visitors to the site of the battle of Flodden.

At Cornhill there are two graveyards. The one in which the church sits is closed and is maintained by the council. The 'new' graveyard sits behind the Village Hall and is maintained by the PCC.

At Carham the churchyard is quite full, although there are still several places. As we have only one or two funerals each year it should last for several years yet, possibly indefinitely. The maintenance of the churchyard including grass cutting is carried out by voluntary work.

## 5. Patterns of Worship

	BRANXTON	CORNHILL	CARHAM
1st SUNDAY	9.30 Holy Communion	11.00 Morning Worship	
2 <sup>nd</sup> "	11.00 Morning Worship		9.30 Morning Worship
3 <sup>rd</sup> "	9.30 Holy Communion	11.00 Holy Communion	
4 <sup>th</sup> "	9.30 Holy Communion		11.00 Morning Worship
5 <sup>th</sup> "	11.00 Joint Service		

Other services –

Branxton's Harvest Festival is held on a Friday evening in Autumn followed by a meal in the village hall. Both the Harvest Service and Carol Service attract large numbers.

Cornhill Church hosts a Christmas Carol Celebration on Christmas Eve followed by wine and mince pies. Our Harvest Service has in the past been followed by a Harvest Lunch in the Collingwood Arms.

Carham holds a Harvest Thanksgiving Service and a Carol Service. There are Communion Services at Christmas, Easter and two other Sundays in the year.

A joint service is held for Remembrance Sunday at Cornhill Church and War Memorial, which attracts a large number from the three parishes, including the congregation of the Methodist Chapel at Donaldson's Lodge.

## 6. Church Tradition

Branxton, Cornhill and Carham are low to middle Anglican. Branxton and Cornhill use the Common Worship liturgy for Communion and Carham occasionally uses the BCP, and all use a simple sheet for Morning Worship.

## 7. Church Activities

Lent and Advent courses in recent years have attracted a small number of regular attenders.

The PCC of Cornhill Church donates the collection on Remembrance Sunday, which is a joint service, to a Service Charity (such as BLESMA, Veteran's Aid and the Royal British Legion). The PCC at Cornhill occasionally revisits its policy on the handling of collections at funerals. The long-standing policy has been to give 50% of the collection to a charity of the bereaved family's choice.

Once a year, one of the joint Fifth Sunday services is a Christian Aid Service, with a collection for Christian Aid.

Cornhill Church operates a community and project fund, which is used to support both church projects and community initiatives.

A strong Mother's Union branch operates in the four parishes and also draws members from beyond.

Across the three parishes there are a number of regular activities and meetings. These include archaeological and history societies; a community choir; a monthly film and afternoon tea; indoor bowls; flower and produce shows; walking groups; and the Women's Institute. Members of the church are involved in most of these organisations and they provide a fruitful source of connection into and contact with the wider community.

## **8. Ministry**

Rob Kelsey is the Priest in Charge of Norham, Cornhill, Carham and Branxton.

There is one retired priest who lives in Carham Parish. Retired clergy from Berwick provide cover for Holy Communion during a vacancy.

Lay people lead worship about 50% of the time.

St. Paul's at Branxton has two lesson readers and one person who leads intercessions.

At Cornhill lay people take it turns to read the lesson. 1 or 2 lay people lead the intercessions.

At Carham lay people take it turn to read the lesson.

There are plans to form a group of people (with worship at its heart, but including non-churchgoers) who would work with other agencies to overcome rural isolation and promote mental wellbeing.

## **9. Finance**

<i>Have you had a parish funding campaign recently?</i>	Yes, at various times in each parish
<i>Is use made of Gift Aid and/or an envelope scheme?</i>	Yes
<i>Is the Parish Share paid regularly and in full?</i>	Yes

No major debts exist in any of the Parishes and all pay their Parish Share regularly and in full. The 3 Parishes work together with Norham to pay expenses from a common purse. Expenses include council tax, water rates, a percentage of the phone and all travel expenses.

## **10. Community involvement**

St. Paul's in Branxton is open during daylight hours. There is a visitor's book to leave comments in. Postcards and a booklet with an account of the Battle of Flodden, written by a late member of the congregation are for sale. The honesty box system, on the whole, works well. The Church is designated as one of the main sites of the first English and cross border eco-museum. (Please visit [www.flodden1513.com](http://www.flodden1513.com).) Branxton participates in the Flodden ride-out in Coldstream Civic Week every August and has a special service in early September around the anniversary of the battle. Church news and events are publicized in the local Fourum newsletter (covering Ford, Etal, Crookham and Branxton communities).

At Cornhill, local people who don't necessarily worship support the Church in other ways. e.g. by mowing the grass and winding the clock. We enjoy friendly and mutually supportive relations with the village shop and the Collingwood Arms Hotel. The back of the Church is available for tourist and community information. Cornhill Village Hall hosts monthly Soup & Sandwich lunch in conjunction with Bell View charity. Involvement of some members of church and also in annual Christmas lunch & summer tea

Carham Church is open every day. The church participated in the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Carham in 2018 and there are interpretation & information boards about the battle. There are ongoing investigations into the history of the area of which the church is a part

## **11. Relationships with neighbouring parishes**

The Rural Churches Group, made up of Cornhill, Carham and Branxton, meets for mutual support and to plan joint events and activities.. The Church Wardens from all 3 Parishes have regular meetings with the licensed Clergy.

The Deanery Development Group has no plans as such, but encourages working across Parish boundaries.

## **12. Ecumenical Relationships**

Good informal relations. Our congregations include individuals from other denominations e.g. the Salvation Army, the United Reformed Church, the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church. The only Church of a different denomination is a Methodist Church in the Parish of Cornhill, situated in the next village. The Methodist congregation joins the Remembrance Sunday Service each November.

As a legacy of the Flodden 500 Commemoration, church ministers from both sides of the border have good relations, and have worked together to produce a tourist leaflet about the local churches. They meet about three times a year for fellowship. The Priest in Charge and Assistant Priest are part of a cross-border Pioneer Ministers' Learning Community.

A high proportion of the border Parishes include people who are affiliated to the Church of Scotland.

## **13. The Parish and the future**

The PCCs would like to see the current lay involvement in services built upon with the support of the new house for duty priest.

We would like to see the realisation of plans for a fresh expression of church, comprising a group of people (with worship at its heart, but including non-churchgoers) who would work with other agencies to overcome rural isolation and promote mental wellbeing.

We would like to continue the strategic development of identifying one or more 'unique selling points' for each church, and how what each church has to offer might contribute to a larger whole, both within the group of parishes and in relation to the rest of the deanery.

One way of doing this might be for the Rural Churches Group to develop into a Mission and Ministry Leadership Group, as part of the Rural Strand of the diocesan strategy.

#### **14. The new incumbent**

The PCC are looking for an outgoing and enthusiastic person with an interest in rural affairs, happy to engage fully in the whole community, not just the Church.