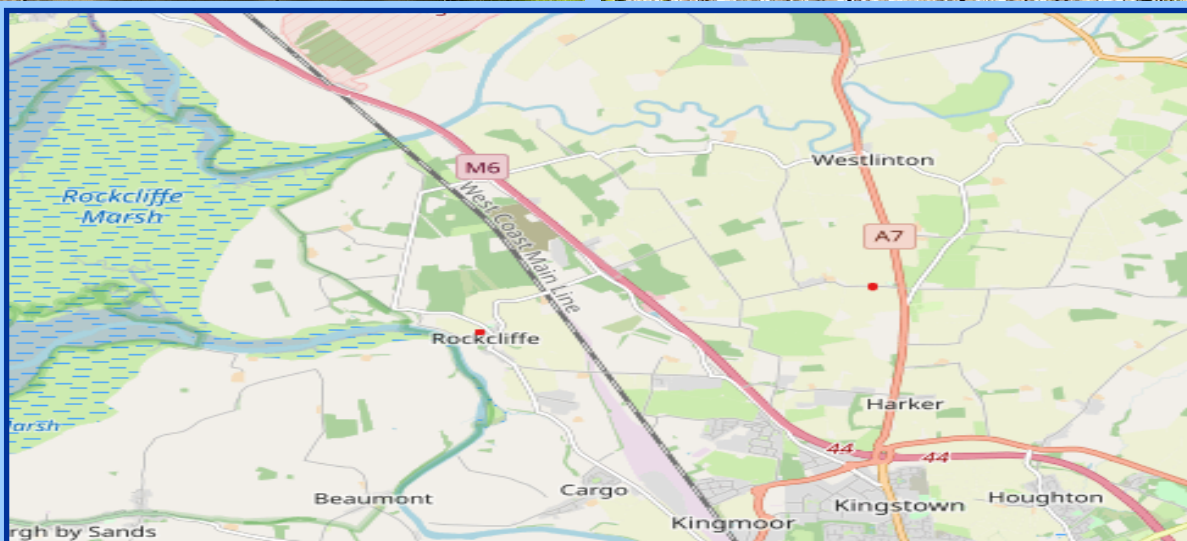


BENEFICE OF ROCKCLIFFE AND BLACKFORD

*Parish Church
of St. Mary the Virgin
Rockcliffe with Cargo*

*Parish Church
of St. John the Baptist
Blackford*



Location of Rockcliffe with Cargo and Blackford Parishes

The Benefice of Rockcliffe with Cargo and Blackford is located north of Carlisle between the River Eden to the south and the village of Westlinton to the north. Both parishes are within easy reach of the M6 enabling access to Scotland and the south. Good road connections including the A66 and A69 give ready access to other parts of the country. There are international airports at Glasgow and Newcastle. Carlisle itself is well served by the railway network.

Rockcliffe parish is to the north and west of Carlisle, including the village of Cargo and the new housing development at Crindledyke. Blackford parish sits north of Carlisle on the A7.



The Parish of Rockcliffe with Cargo

Rockcliffe and Cargo are traditional villages situated on the banks of the River Eden approximately four miles from the historic city of Carlisle and five miles from the Scottish border at Gretna. Both villages have attracted new housing over recent years and the population is growing. The parish also includes the hamlet of Harker Road Ends, a new estate at Crindledyke and a number of isolated farms and dwellings. The population is approximately 1700 adults.

Rockcliffe Marsh is an area of Special Scientific Interest attracting large flocks of migrating geese and swans.



Village Amenities

The parish benefits from local amenities as well as more varied shops, restaurants and leisure facilities in the nearby city of Carlisle.

The Rockcliffe Centre was funded by public subscription and opened in 1991. It is a useful asset which is the envy of many other communities. It is an excellent venue, extensively used by the church.

There is a weekly coffee morning which is well attended and many other fund-raising events are held there, including: Indoor Bowls, Padel/Pickleball, Tuesday Club for pensioners, Zumba, Ball room dancing and a popular art club.

A recent initiative in association with the church has been a Christian Bikers' Breakfast which is attracting motorcyclists from a wide area of northern Cumbria and southern Scotland.



There is a long-established cricket club in Rockcliffe situated adjacent to the river which over the years has benefited from substantial grants for ground improvements. There are opportunities for beginners and younger players as well as the more experienced.

The Crown and Thistle Inn is a centre of social activity and a close association with the church has been built up with the landlords and their regular customers. They have supported the church socially, financially and in other ways over a number of years.



The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin

*(The church building is grade 2*listed by Historic England)*

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/12256/>



There has been a church on this site from at least the thirteenth century. It has an elevated position with commanding views over the mouth of the river Eden towards the Solway Firth.

There is an historic Cross in the churchyard dated to the tenth Century which is grade 1 listed. There are twelfth century gravestones in the porch and the font is architecturally significant. The present church was built in 1849 and although it was significantly damaged by a violent thunderstorm in 1899 it was completely restored and remains in the same form today.

In addition to the main nave there is a side chapel in the North Transept which was furnished by the RAF Carlisle 14MU recognising the close links that the church had with this historic base.

Many people give regularly to the church and support social and fundraising activities. Many families continue to celebrate events such as weddings and baptisms in church and indeed most major village celebrations such as The Jubilee, the Coronation and other national events start with a service in church.



The PCC is a well-established group which has attracted some new members in recent years. Key post holders are in place and robust safeguarding procedures and policies follow Diocesan guidelines monitored by our safeguarding officer. We have two church wardens, one who has been in post for just one year and the other who has started his 21st year as church warden this year!

There is an active involvement of people offering welcome and refreshments at services, lesson reading duties, flower arranging and church cleaning.



"I have been a member of St Mary the Virgin Church, Rockcliffe, for sixty eight years, have been on the PCC for twenty nine years and a Church Warden for twenty one years. Visitors to the church say what a lovely little church it is and admire our stained glass windows. You get a lovely view from the church door looking over the River Eden towards the Solway. It wouldn't be like a Sunday if I didn't go to church."

Willie Little, Church Warden

Rockcliffe Church of England School (Voluntary Controlled)

Rockcliffe Church of England School is located in the village of Rockcliffe. The school serves the communities of Rockcliffe, Cargo, Crindledyke, Todhills and the surrounding areas. The school also attracts many pupils from outside the catchment area due to its good reputation. The school provides an excellent education to around 140 children aged from 3 - 11; with each child nurtured in a kind, Christian focussed environment.

Key information about the school can be found on its website at:

<https://www.rockcliffe.cumbria.sch.uk/>

There are close links between church and school. The church appoints two governors, one of whom has been the vicar.



The vicar conducts a weekly assembly in school and is well known to all members of the school community.

School services are held in church at times such as Harvest Festival, Easter and Christmas. There is a Leavers' Service at the end of the school year for those children leaving to go to secondary school.

It is hoped that these successful and positive links between Church and school will continue to be encouraged and developed.



The Parish of Blackford



Blackford means what it says, a black ford or river-crossing. However, unlike other places of the name, it is a mix of Old English and Old Norse: the first element is Old English blæc "black", while the second element is Old Norse vathr / vaðr, ford, river crossing, which usually occurs as -wath in place-names with this element (e.g. Wath upon Dearne). The name was recorded as Blakiwaith in 1165.

Blackford is a rural community in the civil parish of Westlinton, made up of about twenty scattered farms, situated east of Rockcliffe. There is a small housing estate at Harker Park (45 Houses) and there has been some new house building in the hamlet of Westlinton. There is a caravan site near the church with a significant number of permanent homes and some tourists during the summer. The population is approximately 560 adults.

Local Amenities

Facilities within the parish include a Residential Hotel at Westlinton and a licensed restaurant and pub at Metal Bridge. There are a small number of bed and breakfast establishments

There is a horse-riding school at Black Dyke Farm with private swimming pool and a small number of business units at Harker which include a popular tearoom and restaurant, gift shop, garden centre, Conservatory and Caravan Sales.

The mobile post office is based outside church on its weekly visits.

Although there is no church hall or village hall, the school is available and widely used for church and community events.



The Church of St John the Baptist, Blackford

(The church building is Grade 2 listed by Historic England)

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/12234/>

St. John the Baptist Church, built of the local red sandstone, was built in 1870 and is on a crossroads of the main A7 tourist route to Edinburgh, two miles north of junction 44 of the M6 motorway. The main road through Blackford, the A7, is the old road between England and Edinburgh and it remained the main route for travellers until 1971 when the M6 was extended to join the A74. The Roman road, Castra Exploratum, leading from Carlisle to Netherby, ran just to the east of this road.

The church was consecrated by his lordship, the Bishop of Carlisle on St John the Baptist's Day, Friday 26th June 1870.



The eagle lectern is of oak Japanese carving.

The fabric was restored in 1899 and a very fine new pipe organ by Harrison and Harrison was added and is a glorious asset to church services.



Hyde and Pevsner describe the church as being built from sandstone, with quoins, having: a green slate roof with cross finials; a nave with a south porch; a chancel with a north vestry; a bell turret with a slate spire on the west gable; a pointed moulded arch on the porch; and windows mullioned with triform heads.

When designed and built, the architects, Messrs. Cory and Ferguson, described the church as follows: "It is designed in a very simple economical phase of the flowing decorated style of Gothic architecture. It provides accommodation for 150 worshippers and consists of a chancel 21ft by 16ft, a nave 36ft by 24ft with Vestry and Baptistry at the West end. A three-light window, filled with flowing tracery lights the East end and three square-headed windows with traceried heads, light the Nave. The seats are low but enclosed with doors".

The church is well maintained, with open pews and is a warm, light and welcoming place to worship. The seating capacity is one hundred in pews plus sixteen in the choir stalls.



The congregation comprises mostly of those local to the area and some tourists from the caravan site in the summer. The community view the church as very much a hub of the community and show great commitment to it and activities associated with it. There are no churches of other denominations within the parish.

Blackford CE Primary School (Voluntary Aided)

The original school from 1831 predates the church. It was rebuilt on an enlarged scale in 1882 and has seen much development over the years and is now enjoys a pleasant modern building and a welcoming site, providing wonderful opportunities for learning, physical development and recreation.



Blackford Church of England Primary School has 55 pupils from 3-11 years and provides both Breakfast and After School Care. The school and church are sited next to one another as the focal point of this widespread community. There are well-established links between the two and positive relationships are enjoyed.



The current vicar leads worship in school each week as well as a school family service once a month in church, to which parents, families and the community are welcome. He is a well-known figure in school and acts as a governor, along with other appointed church representatives. The school is thriving and numbers are growing.



Key information about the school can be found on its web site:

<https://www.blackford-school.co.uk/index.php/en/>

Personal Profile for the new Incumbent

We believe that the Benefice needs someone with the following attributes:

- The ability to recognise the needs for pastoral care within the elderly rural community as well as the younger population who look to Carlisle for employment and social life.
- Enthusiasm and ability to draw into the church all sections of the community, and value the dedication and commitment of all.
- A commitment to delivering a ministry to young families within both parishes and to build on those good practices which already exist between the Church and the two schools: encouraging all age groups to realise the relevance of Christianity in their everyday lives.
- Leadership qualities which will build on and support the involvement of the laity in all aspects of the church.



"After almost four joyful and blessed years of ministry here, I will be retiring on January 12th. My journey as your vicar will come to an end, but it is my deepest prayer that the seeds we have planted together will continue to grow and bear fruit long into the future.

Serving these parishes has been an immense privilege. On many occasions, I felt profoundly aware of how Christ's presence unites us, and how God knits our lives together. We have shared in the work of bringing God's light into the world, supporting one another in our joys and struggles. And as I prepare to step away, I carry with me each moment of kindness, each shared prayer, each cup of tea offered in friendship.

As we move through Advent together this year, my heart is full of gratitude and hope for the future of these wonderful parishes and their people. God's faithfulness endures, and Christ's light will continue to shine here, guiding you and those who will come after."

Rev. Ian Johnston - November 2024