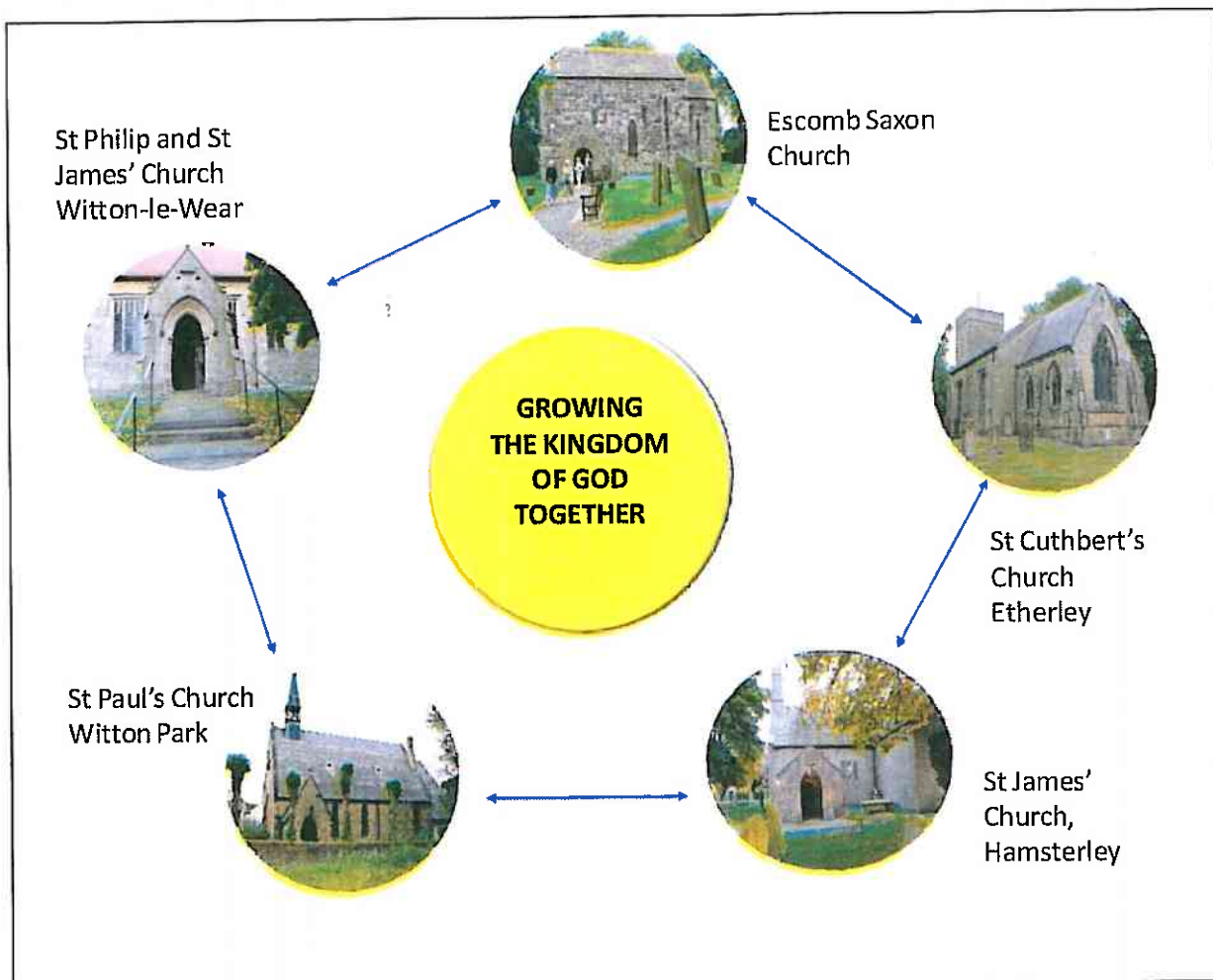


The Parish Profiles of Escomb, Etherley, Hamsterley, Witton Park and Witton-le-Wear



February 2009

The Diocese of Durham

Foreword by The Right Reverend Father in God, Tom, by Divine Providence Lord Bishop of Durham

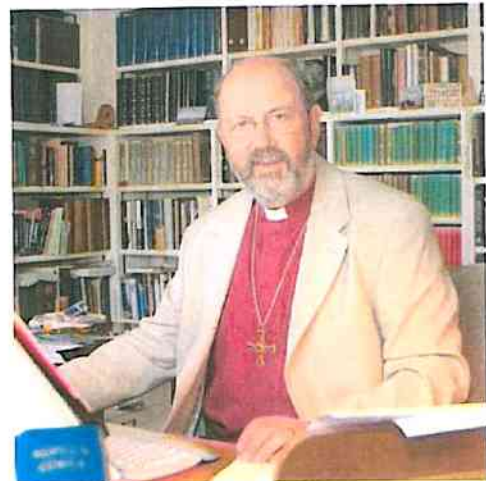


Durham is quite a large Diocese in terms of population and number of churches, and covers a diverse range of communities, many of which are seeing new developments since the demise of the old industries of mining, steel manufacture and ship building.

The Diocese follows the old county boundaries of Durham, the River Tyne to the north and the River Tees to the south, which today means that it includes the southern half of the modern county of 'Tyne and Wear'. We have two excellent universities (Durham & Sunderland), two of the finest museums in the country (Beamish and Bowes) and some of the most kind-hearted and good-humoured people you will meet anywhere . . . but do come and see for yourself.

A blessing I have often used since coming to the Diocese can be turned into a prayer, and it's one I pray for all who visit the area:

May Almighty God make you faithful to his calling, cheerful in his service, and fruitful for his kingdom. And all in the name of Jesus. ¹



Tom, Bishop of Durham

¹ Source: Durham Diocese Web Site Home Page

CONTENTS	Page
Foreword by The Right Reverend Father in God, Tom, by Divine Providence Lord Bishop of Durham	1
Introduction by the Archdeacon, The Venerable Nick Barker and the Area Dean The Revd Canon Neville Vine (Honorary Canon), Area Dean, Vicar	3
Executive Summary	
• Joint Statement from the Churchwardens of the five parishes	4
• The Future	4
• The New Priest in Charge	4
The Local Area	5
The Parishes of Escomb, Etherley, Hamsterley, Witton Park and Witton-le-Wear	6
Parish Boundaries	6
General Information	9
Summary of Key Data and Information of the five Parishes	10
Parish Profiles	
• Escomb	13
• Etherley	17
• Hamsterley	25
• Witton Park	30
• Witton-le-Wear	33
Vision and Strategic Action Plan	36
Statement of Accounts for the Five Parishes	38
Parochial Church Council Contacts	51

Executive Summary

Joint Statement of the Churchwardens of the five parishes.

The need to develop a Joint Parish Profile encompassing all five parishes has been both challenging and rewarding. It has united the five parishes, and focused our attention on how we can, and must, sustain and develop God's ministry in our villages and beyond.

The work undertaken thus far has indicated that the potential for spiritual and mission development in the Group of Churches has not been fully realised. For various reasons, some beyond our control, much of the possible development within the group of parishes has not happened.

The Future

We recognise the need to look forward and work together with the new Priest in Charge to use the skills and talents of those who are involved in the local churches to develop God's ministry. This will require strong and effective leadership and guidance from the new Priest in Charge, but more importantly members of the church congregations and the Parochial Church Councils must be empowered and willing to take responsibility for much of this work.

There is an urgent need to react to a rapidly changing world and to the way in which we sustain and develop our ministry locally. In order to do this we must review our Vision and Strategy for the five parishes and produce an agreed Action Plan with clear objectives and timescales. We must sustain the traditional church values and buildings and at the same time develop new ways of reaching out to our local and wider communities.

This may require a cultural and mindset change in the way in which we work to "Grow the Kingdom of God". There are many resources and training opportunities available for Lay ministry and we, together with the Diocese and the Auckland Deanery, must support, encourage, and empower those individuals or groups of people involved in developing a mission shaped ministry in an Ecumenical and Fellowship environment.

The New Priest in Charge

We have no strong preferences in respect of gender, age or family circumstances of the new Priest in Charge but feel strongly that our ecumenical ties must be sustained and developed. It is also important that we continue to harness the skills and talents of the retired ordained priests to support the parishes and the new Priest in Charge. We also feel strongly that the new Priest in Charge must have a strong commitment to enabling and to teaching Lay ministry and also to empowering others in their discipleship, both young and old.

It is also important that the new Priest in Charge has a high profile in the local communities and provides his / her ministry in the context of a mission shaped church.

It is therefore essential that the New Priest in Charge has exceptional leadership skills, is enthusiastic and energetic and has a strong commitment to work in the parishes to sustain and develop God's ministry.

The Local Area

There are currently seven Local Government District Councils in the area.

Due to the reorganisation of Local Government, the seven local councils will merge together on the 1st April 2009, forming one large Unitary Authority.

The five parishes are currently within the Teesdale and Wear Valley District Council Boundaries.

Teesdale

Teesdale describes the area that surrounds the upper reaches of the River Tees, from its source in the hills to just west of the railway town of Darlington, County Durham where the river broadens out into the Tees Valley.

Teesdale is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is home to England's highest waterfall, beautiful wooded valleys, open moorland, historic market towns, picturesque villages and traditional sandstone farmhouses. It is often described as the northernmost of the Yorkshire Dales. In fact the centre of the River Tees used to mark the border between Yorkshire and Durham and the 'County Bridge' as it is still known, over the River Tees in Barnard Castle, had a wedding chapel (like Gretna Green in the Borders).

More than half of the land in Teesdale is privately owned. The Raby (Lord Barnard) and Strathmore (The Earl of Strathmore) estates are the largest – and the two families are linked to the dale's main visitor attractions, The [Bowes Museum](#) and [Raby Castle](#). Farms belonging to Lord Barnard are easy to spot – they are all whitewashed. Tradition has it that this is so that Lord Barnard may easily recognise those properties where he might expect hospitality.

The Strathmores (Bowes-Lyon) are related to the Royal Family. John Bowes (son of the 10th Earl of Strathmore) founded The Bowes Museum.

Within the parish of Hamsterley there is a Forestry Commission forest of some 5000 acres, which attracts many visitors from across the whole of the North East, and from greater distances, for recreational activities including walking, mountain biking and horse riding. There are also three small caravan sites that bring in summer visitors.²

Wear Valley

Wear Valley is one of the seven local councils that form the County of Durham. The district extends from the centre of the county to its western boundary, spanning over 30 miles. As the name suggests the district is based upon the valley of the river Wear, from its source near the Cumbrian border to the point where it leaves the district.

It is a district of contrasts, with almost half of its 195 square miles falling within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is a mixture of both rural and urban, with the majority of the population living in the more urban eastern part of the district, which includes the market towns of Bishop Auckland and Crook.³

The Saxon Church in the parish of Escomb is of great national and international historic interest and attracts a considerable number of tourists / visitors. There is also a Roman fort in the nearby village of Binchester. The Diocese's main administrative offices are based in the grounds of Auckland Castle, the home of the Bishop of Durham.

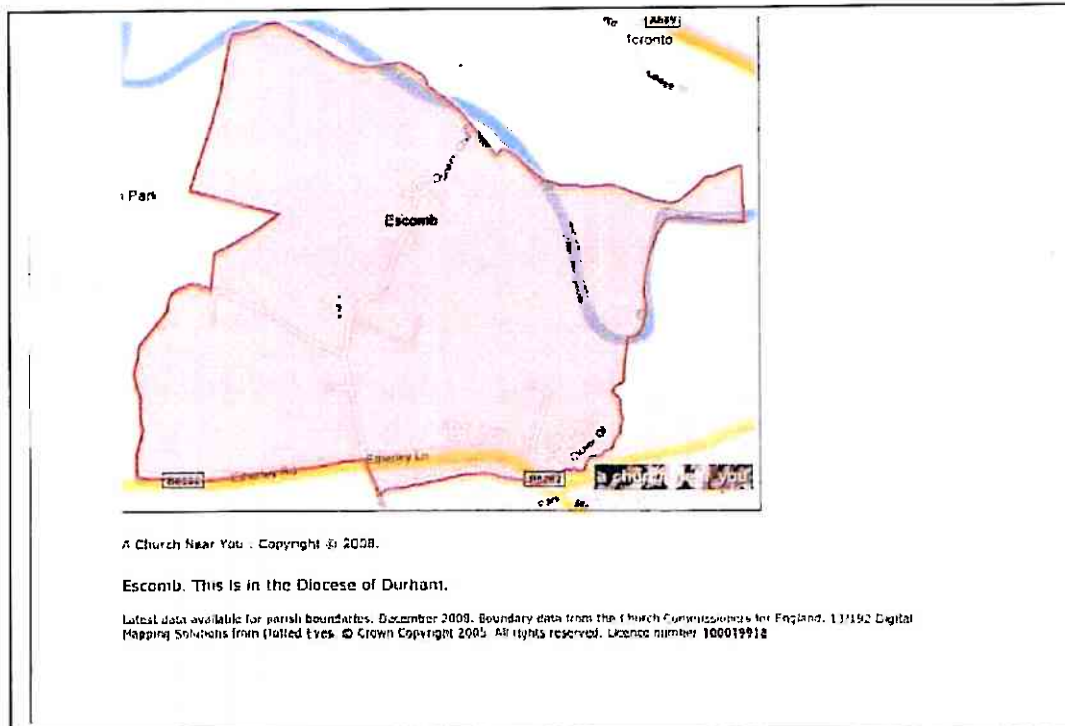
² Source: Teesdale District Council Web Site Home Page

³ Source: Wear Valley District Council Web Site Home Page

The Parishes of Escomb, Etherley, Hamsterley, Witton Park and Witton-le-Wear

The five parishes form the joint benefice within the Deanery of Auckland.

Parish Boundary - Escomb



Parish Boundary - Etherley

