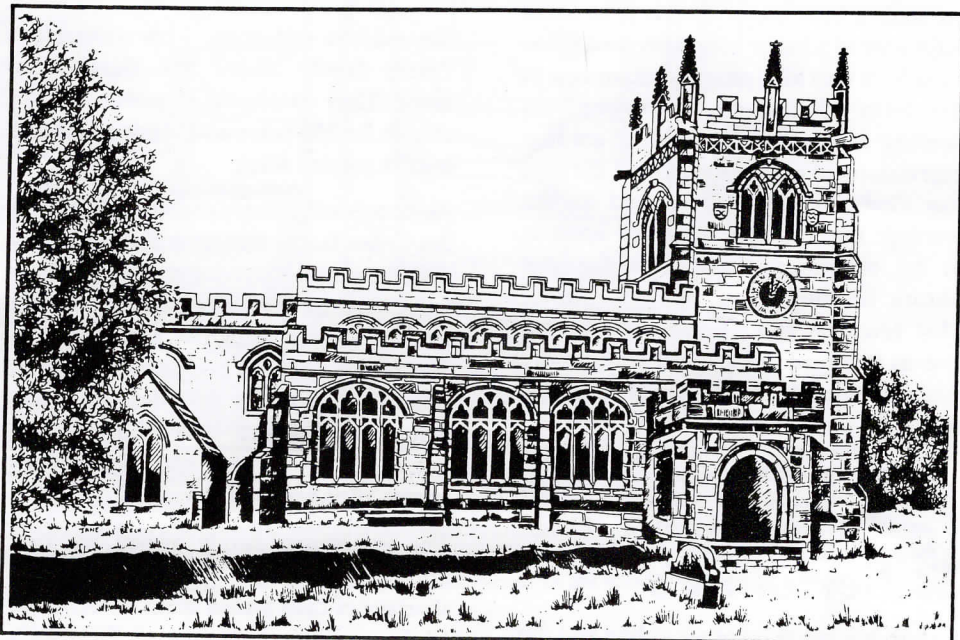


*Parish Church of  
St Bertoline*  
**BARTHOMLEY**



I

## *From the Vicar ...*

Welcome to this ancient church!

In 1090 the Normans began this building in stone, but it is likely that the Saxons built in timber years before that. So generations of ordinary Christians have been baptised, married and buried here. This church has been much loved and used over the centuries and is still a lively place of worship.

While it is always possible to spend money on such a building as this, it is in some ways now in a better condition than it has been for a very long time. Constant care in the form of cleaning, decorating and keeping an eye on the building are tiny expressions of our thanks, for all the love that God has shown to us, and for the privilege that has been bestowed upon us to be temporary custodians for this historic building.

May you have some sense of that same love as you read this booklet and explore this magnificent Church, which God has entrusted to our care.

Darrel Speedy  
Canon

## *St Bertoline's*

A church is made up of a building and the congregation who worship there. In Barthomley, the beautiful old building houses many reminders of the individuals, both Lords of the Manor and ordinary villagers, who have peopled its history and contributed to its upkeep and refinement. This work continues today.

Until 1956, this was the only church dedicated to Bertoline, a little-known 8th-century saint, who is said to have performed a miracle here where the church now stands. The Domesday Book

refers to the village as Berthemleu – Bertoline's "ley" or "clearing". The name has since evolved to "Barthomley".

In the past, St Bertoline's was the centre of a large parish which included the village of Barthomley and the neighbouring townships of Balterley, Crewe, Alsager and Haslington. The area has been owned by a small number of important families since the time of William the Conqueror, and many of those involved in its history are buried in the church or churchyard.

Towards the end of the 11th century the Praers family leased the Barthomley estate. They continued as patrons of the church for 250 years and began to rebuild it in its present form.

As visitors will quickly realise, the name of the Crewe family is inextricably bound up with the church's development. They were first linked in 1313 when Richard Praers married Joanna, daughter and heiress of Thomas de Crewe. Their grand-daughter, Elizabeth, married a very dashing young man, Sir Robert Fulleshurst, who inherited the Crewe and Barthomley estates after her death.

The Fulleshurst family owned the land until the reign of Elizabeth I, when shortage of cash forced them to sell to Sir Christopher Hatton, one of Elizabeth's favourites and later Lord Chancellor of England. Some years afterwards, in 1608, Ranulph Crewe bought the estates and the advowson of Barthomley church (the right to appoint the rector), and returned them to the name of Crewe.

## *About this Guide*

This guide takes the form of a walk round the church, in an anti-clockwise direction.

## ***Inside the Church***

***The tour starts under the tower arch, by the font.***

### ***The Nave***

Ahead of you is the nave, built in the Perpendicular style of Gothic architecture which dominated church building in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The masons have decorated the top of the first pillar on the right with a carving of leaves, but have left the rest plain.

Above you, the beautifully carved oak roof dates from the late 15th century, when medieval designers felt that a lofty roof symbolised man's aspiration towards heaven. The roof beams are elaborately shaped and carved. The bosses (where the beams intersect) are decorated with the coats of arms of the families who contributed to the cost of the building, and remind us of their generosity and love for the church. The roof was once brightly painted and gilded.

The octagonal stone font is 19th-century, modelled on an earlier one and in keeping with the original Elizabethan steps and heavy oak cover. It stands near the door to symbolise that people are welcomed at baptism into the life of the church. In past centuries, fonts were provided with a cover to keep the holy water clean and prevent it from being stolen for superstitious uses.

***Turn and look at the paintings on each side of the tower arch.***

The two large oil paintings depict the Old Testament brothers, Moses and Aaron. In the 18th century, pictures like these were often hung behind the altar, next to the

Ten Commandments. Unfortunately, this pair is neither signed nor dated, and their origin is uncertain.

Aaron is wearing the splendid vestments, described in detail in Exodus Chapter 28, in which he and his family were anointed priests. On his breastplate are twelve precious stones set in gold and engraved with the names of Jacob's sons, to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Moses, on the opposite side of the arch, is wearing the traditional brown robe of a prophet and carrying a large stick, with which God gave him power to perform miracles, such as when he struck rock with it in the desert and water poured out for the thirsty Israelites.

The list of rectors, hanging to the left of Aaron, was compiled and donated in 1963 by Mr Geoffrey Eardley, a parishioner from Scholar Green. The first known rector was Robertus de Chissulle, appointed in 1303 by Edward, Prince of Wales. The names of the priests who served here before that date were not recorded.

### ***The South Aisle***

***Walk on into the side aisle and look at the window on your right.***

The artist of this 19th-century stained-glass window appears to have made a mistake. The window portrays the apostles, Peter, James and John. James is almost certainly meant to be John's brother, known as James the Great, but he is holding a fuller's club (used in the making of cloth), which is the emblem of James the Less, the son of Alphaeus, who was killed with one of these clubs! Obviously the artist has not made a sufficiently careful study of his Bible.

*Turn left to walk up the south aisle.*

The bronze plaque on the wall between the windows commemorates three generations of a family which is well remembered in Barthomley. Edward Hinchliffe Junior lived in the village as a child, and was rector here from 1834 to 1850. Shortly afterwards he wrote a book called "Barthomley", in the form of letters to his son. In this, he describes the church and parish, and gives many fascinating insights into the customs of the Cheshire countryside in the early 19th century. His father, Edward, was also Rector of Barthomley, and his grandfather was Vice-Chancellor of Trinity College and Bishop of Peterborough. Look at the bottom three courses of the wall between the windows. The stones here are smaller and less regularly shaped than those above, suggesting that they are the remains of an older, 12th-century building.



*The stained-glass windows in this aisle were made by Pilkington's of St Helens in 1852. You can find their insignia near the bottom.*

*Turn left past the 19th-century pulpit and right under the chancel arch into the chancel.*

### ***The Chancel***

A 13th-century chancel, built in the reign of Edward I, survived until the Victorian restoration of the church in 1852, when a new one was built. The new chancel was substantially altered in 1924 by the first and last Marquess of Crewe, as a memorial to his son and heir, George, Earl of Madeley, and the latter's half-brother, who both died young and are buried together in the churchyard.

These 20th-century alterations were designed by Paley and Austin, well-known architects of their day, who widened and heightened the chancel arch and replaced the roof and the north and east windows. The memorial window above the altar depicts Christ in Glory, surrounded by angels and archangels.

The altar was made in the reign of Elizabeth I. The left-hand front panel shows the Nativity scene, with two shepherds bringing gifts of a hare and a bird to the infant Jesus. On the right is the Flight into Egypt. The donkey is being coaxed to carry Mary and her baby, watched by a squirrel sitting in a tree, eating a nut. This provides a link with 16th-century Cheshire, when a squirrel eating a nut was the county emblem. Notice, too, how the figures are wearing Tudor hats. We do not know whether the craftsman was conscious of this anachronism.



*In the 16th-century, altars were usually completely covered with a heavy cloth, or "carpet", and so the craftsman's intention must have been to beautify the holy table itself rather than instruct the congregation by carved pictures.*

The brass plaque, written in Latin, on the wall to the right of the altar, was given by the wife of Zachary Cawdrey, one of the 17th-century rectors. In 1647, when a fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, he was prosecuted by Parliament for "using the Prayerbook against Protestant

orders and praying to the King", and was probably sent to Barthomley in 1649 to be out of the limelight. He gave a silver chalice and paten to the church, which are still in use, and wrote five learned works, which are not.



*The circular plaques feature the heads of unidentified saints. Dated 1891, they are French or Flemish.*

On your right the door in the wrought iron screen leads to the Crewe Chapel, built by Sir Ranulph Crewe to house his family's memorials. The rector is willing to unlock the chapel for visitors, at convenient times.

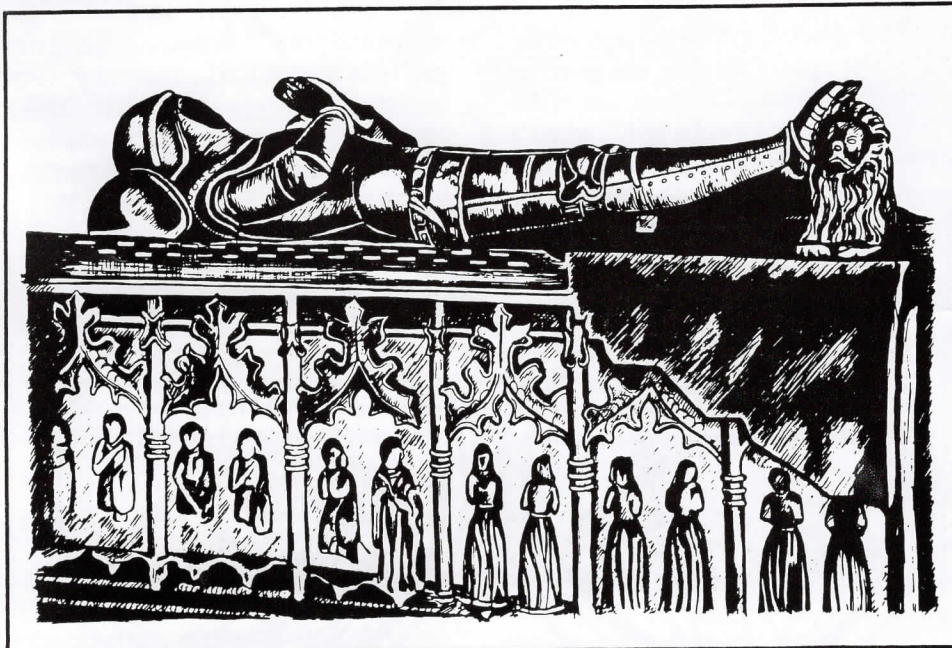
## *The Crewe Chapel*

Sir Ranulph Crewe, who built this chapel at the beginning of the 17th century, was an admirable figure in the history of the church and neighbourhood. He was the second son of a Nantwich tanner, John Crewe, whose dream was for his branch of the family to become once more "Crewes of Crewe Hall". He imbued his sons, Thomas and Ranulph, with this ambition, so that they worked hard and rose to positions of authority. Ranulph became a Member of Parliament,

Speaker of the House of Commons, King's Sergeant, Attorney General and, finally, Chief Justice of the King's Bench. He was dismissed from this last position because, as a man of high integrity, he refused to allow King Charles I to levy extra taxes without the consent of Parliament.

In 1608 Ranulph was able to buy up the estates and rebuild Crewe Hall. He was only sad that his father had not lived long enough to see his ambitions splendidly realised.

On your right as you enter the chapel is the alabaster effigy and tomb of Sir Robert Fulleshurst or Foulshurst, which dates from 1390. He was connected with Barthomley through his marriage to Elizabeth Praers, heiress of Crewe and Barthomley.



*Sir Robert Fulleshurst is wearing the armour of a 14th-century knight, with a conical helmet and a camail of chain mail protecting his neck and shoulders. A lion supports his feet. The small carved figures around the sides of the tomb represent members of his family mourning his death. Six men, standing in pairs on small pedestals, face outwards, while six women are turned to face the coffin.*

At the time of the Black Prince, Sir Robert was one of the four young Cheshire "squires" (attendants) who served James Lord Audley and followed him into battle. At Poitiers in 1356, Lord Audley and his followers were in the vanguard of the Black Prince's troops, who fought against a huge French army and won the day. Sir Robert came home well rewarded for his bravery and was later knighted by Edward III.

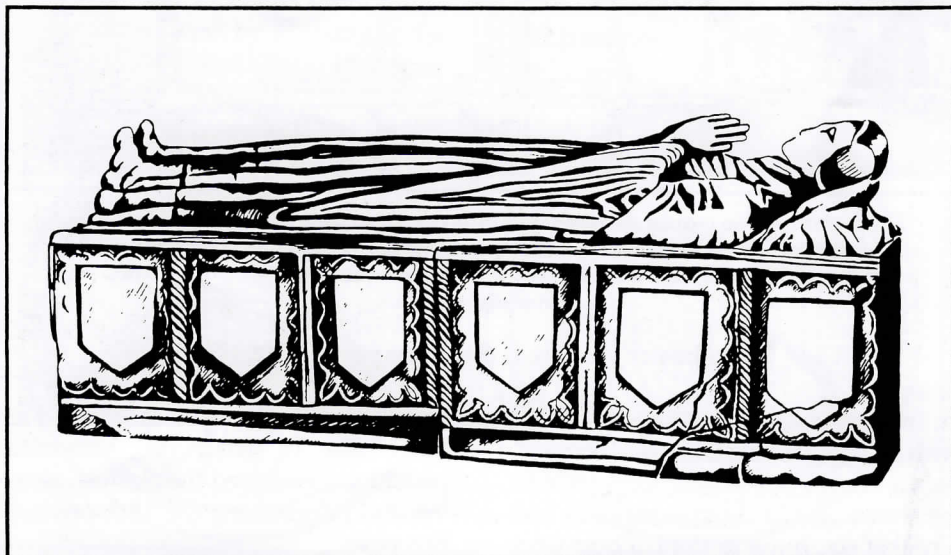
Another Fulleshurst tomb and effigy flanks the end (east) wall of the chapel. This is Robert Fulleshurst, who was rector here before the Reformation. Because he was a Roman Catholic, his tomb was hidden in a recess in the wall of the chapel on the other side of the church, to protect it from destruction by the Puritans. Look closely at the folds of his robes for traces of the paint which originally covered the whole monument. The workmen who accidentally discovered the effigy, some two hundred years ago, scrubbed it with soap and water to clean

off the dust and removed the richly coloured paint.

In the middle of the chapel lies the serene, white marble figure of Sybil Marcia, first wife of the 2nd Baron Houghton, who became Marquess of Crewe in 1911. They married in 1880, and to the young baron's great grief she died only seven years later, at the age of thirty. The effigy and tomb were sculpted by Sir Joseph Boehm, sculptor to Queen Victoria.

The elaborate monument on the south (outside) wall, embellished with flowers, urns, cherubs and torches, commemorates Anne, wife of the 1st Baron Crewe. She died in 1711.

To the right of the door as you leave the chapel, you will see four brass plaques. They were originally on graveslabs in the churchyard, and commemorate four members of the Malbon family of Bradley Hall, Haslington, who died in the 17th century. The Malbons were descendants of William de Malbedeng who owned this area after the Norman Conquest.



*The rector, Robert Fulleshurst, is dressed in priests' robes and is lying on an altar tomb, decorated with shields and carved balusters (short pillars).*

*On leaving the chancel walk back down the nave towards the font, and then turn right and go up the north aisle towards the organ chapel.*

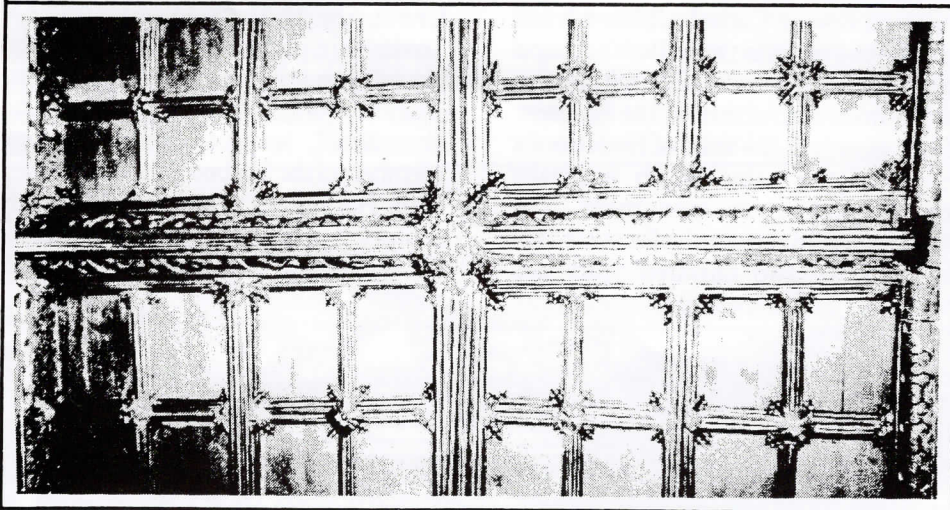
## **The North Aisle**

The 16th-century screen enclosing the north chapel dates from the time of Elizabeth I. The verses from the Old Testament, carved along the top of each side, perfectly echo the importance of the people from every sphere of life who make up the family of the church: –

“Let there be no strife among us for we are brethren”. Genesis 13 v.8. “The rich and poor meet together. The Lord is the maker of them all”. Proverbs 22 v.2.

The grapes which feature in the decoration extend this theme into the New Testament. We are not only united together as brothers, but we are joined to Christ as well – He is the vine and we are the branches.

Until the installation of the present organ, the chapel contained the Crewe family pews. The organ was a gift of Lady Crewe in 1865, and the air needed to work it had to be pumped by hand until 1963.



*The craftsmen who created the roof of this aisle carved its date, 1589, on one of the stone corbels supporting the main beams, which is now hidden by the organ. They fashioned the roof in a similar, but more delicate, style to that of the nave, decorating it with flowers, leaves and shields.*

***Retrace your steps down the north aisle.***

In front of you is a special pew, carved with bells to indicate that it was reserved for the team of bell-ringers. Only six bells are shown, as the church originally had a peal of six, hung in 1743. These were

recast in 1908 and increased to eight. The date 1852 is when the Victorian parishioners restored the church, altering and refurbishing the 18th-century box pews.

***Return to the font and turn right under the tower arch.***

## Under the Tower

Just before Christmas in 1643 the floor beneath this tower was stained with the blood of seventeen local people. Pause to visualise the scene, as described by Edward Burghall, Vicar of Acton, in his diary: –

“On Saturday, they [the Royalists] came to Barthomley. As they marched they set upon the church, which had in it about twenty neighbours, that had gone in for safety; but the Lord Byron’s troop, and Connaught, a major to Col Sneyd, set upon them and won the church; the men fled into the steeple, but the enemy burning the forms, rushes, mats etc., made such a smoke, that being almost stifled, they called for quarter, which was granted by Connaught; but when they had them in their power they stripped them all naked, and most cruelly murdered twelve of them . . . Connaught cut the throat of Mr John Fowler, a hopeful young man, a minor, and only three of them escaped miraculously, the rest being cruelly wounded.”

In fairness, it must be said that the villagers were armed, and John Fowler, the rector’s son, foolishly fired on the soldiers from the tower, killing one of their number and provoking revenge.

On the wall to your left in the corner of the tower are the metal clappers of the six original bells of 1743. The heavy carved reredos was moved here from behind the altar when the chancel was renovated in 1924.

When the bells were recast in 1908, their solid oak frames were used to make this glass-topped showcase. Inside are some

old leather-bound books, which at one time were kept chained to a desk in the pew used by the servants of Crewe Hall, as was the custom before the days of mass printing. You can still see a piece of the chain on the copy of Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs”, printed in 1632 and donated to the church by Mr Robert Corke, Parish Clerk in 1633. The long-handled alms dishes are engraved “Presented to the Parish of Barthomley by Mr Timothy Whitby 1843”. In this way Mr Whitby has kept his memory alive in the church.

The parishioners whose names appear on the large boards on the right-hand wall bequeathed money towards the maintenance of the church or to help the poor.



*Royalist officers such as Major Connaught were distinguished by their wide-brimmed, plumed hats and “bucket-top” boots.*

## Outside the Church

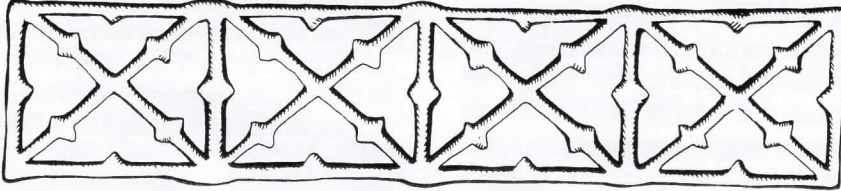
### The Tower

On leaving the church, turn to look at the exterior of the tower. Built in the late 15th century, it is typical of many sturdy square towers found in Cheshire, decorated with gargoyles, pinnacles and carvings.

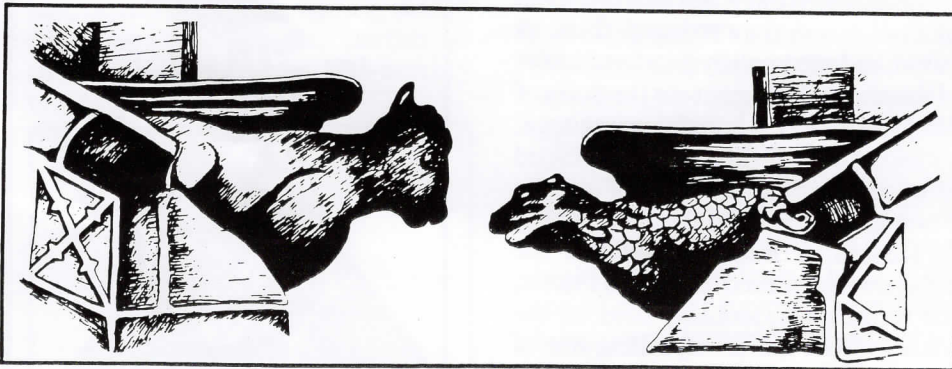
The shields on the tower and porch bear the coats of arms of important local families in the Middle Ages, reminding

us that they spared no expense in the rebuilding of their church. For example, the shield on the left side of the tower, with a lattice-type pattern, represents the coat of arms of the Fulleshurst family.

The clock face dates from 1710. The original workings were made by the Barthomley smith and lasted until 1934, when the present clock was donated by the rector, Rev. Armistead.



*Eight other towers in Cheshire are decorated with this distinctive band of criss-cross patterning.*



*The magnificent gargoyles take the water off the roof.*

*Walk in a clockwise direction around the church to the north porch.*

This porch is also in the typically Cheshire style of Gothic architecture. Porches were traditionally built on the south side of a church, but here it was built on the north side to be more accessible from the village and the road.

Before the Reformation there were statues in the niches on the front of the porch, and the congregation blessed themselves with holy water from the carved stone stoup to the left of the door.

*Continue along the north wall to the Norman doorway.*



*This 11th-century doorway was rebuilt into the wall here, reminding us that there was at least one, but probably several, churches on this site before the present one. The distinctive zig-zag pattern on a round arch is typical of Norman architecture. The simple face, surrounded by leaves, at the top of the left-hand pillar, may represent Jack-in-the-Green, a pagan symbol of nature's fertility, since a number of pagan ideas still lurked in the minds of medieval Christians.*

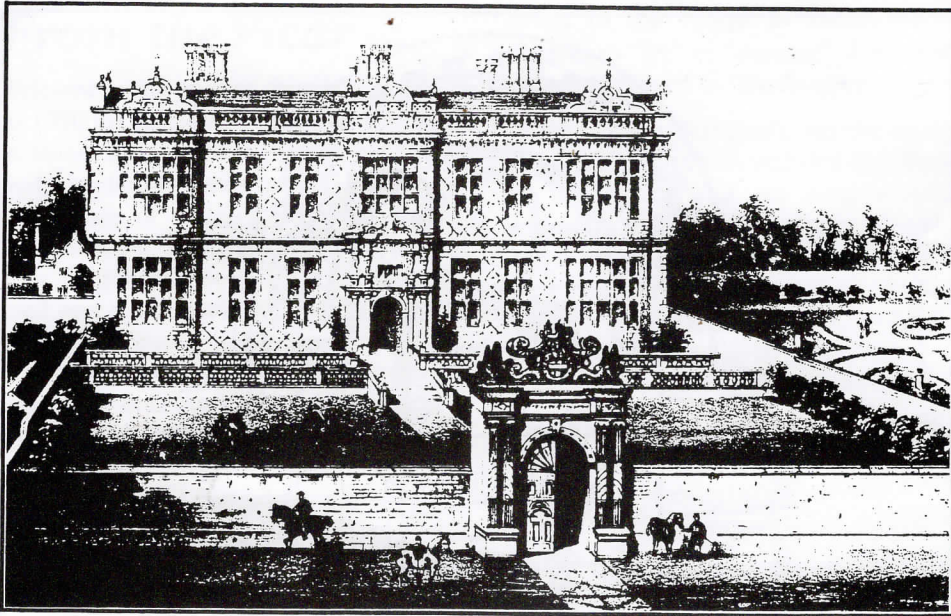
*Continue round to the end wall of the church.*

When the chancel was altered in 1926 the shield motif was adopted once more. The one on the right bears the arms of the Marquess of Crewe, with a lion in two quarters. The left-hand shield shows three mitres – the arms of the Bishop of Chester.

Before leaving the village, stroll past the black and white cottages and the White Lion public house, named after the lion on the Crewe coat of arms. It dates from

1614, and has long been connected with the church. It provided a handy home for the schoolmaster, whose little school once stood in the churchyard. At the White Lion the Parish Clerk brewed the Church Ales, an early method of fund-raising in the parish.

We hope you have enjoyed your tour of this ancient church, and the stories of some of the people for whom it has been a focal point in life.



*The Crewe family had close links with Barthomley church from the 14th century. Crewe Hall, two-and-a-half miles north-west of Barthomley, looked like this after it was rebuilt in fine style in 1608 by Sir Ramulph Crewe, who also created the Crewe family chapel in the church.*

*Produced in co-operation with the parish of St Bertoline, Barthomley.*



Cheshire Churches – a project which aims to help visitors to understand and appreciate Cheshire's religious buildings. Funded by the Manpower Services Commission; sponsored by Cheshire County Council.

Other guides are available in this series: contact Heritage and Recreation Service, County Hall, Chester CH1 3YZ. Tel: Chester 602424

 **Cheshire**  
Heritage & Recreation

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St. Bertoline's  
**Tower Ceiling**



If you'd like to sponsor a boss please call  
Len Griffin on (01270) 879771

Painted bosses from left to right starting at the top-

1. St Bertoline
2. The Bread
3. The Lady Bishop
4. St Werburgh
5. The Organ Pipes
6. The Praers Family
7. The Foulshurst Family
8. The Fire
9. The Bells
10. The Crewe Family
11. The Duchy of Lancaster
12. The Massacre
13. St Chad
14. The Stafford Knot
15. The Cheshire Wheatsheaf
16. The Date



## **The Lords of the Manor**

### **The Praers Family**

Extensive landowners in Cheshire who held the tenure of Barthomley for nearly three hundred years from approx. 1087 to 1377.

### **The Foulsehurst Family**

Held the manor of Barthomley for two hundred years until 1576. Sir Robert Fouleshurst was a squire to Lord Audley and helped win the Battle of Poitiers for Edward the Black Prince in 1356.

### **The Crewe Family**

The Crewe lordship lasted for over three hundred years from 1608 until 1936. Sir Ranulph Crewe built the Crewe Chapel at the beginning of the seventeenth century and nineteen members of the family lie in the crypt beneath.

### **The Duchy Of Lancaster**

The Crown bought the estate in 1936 and the manor of Barthomley completed its feudal cycle and reverted to the monarch.

## **The Three Saints**

### **St Chad of Lichfield**

Barthomley was in the Diocese of Lichfield until the creation of the Diocese of Chester during the Reformation. St Chad introduced Christianity to Mercia in around 660.

### **St Werburgh of Chester**

Barthomley became part of the Diocese of Chester in 1541. St Werburgh was an Anglo-Saxon princess who founded monastic houses and nunneries and, as legend has it, restored a goose to life.

### **St Bertoline of Stafford**

St Bertoline was a Mercian prince who became a hermit and founded Stafford in 705. His preaching cross is buried in the town at St Mary's Church on the site of his original chapel.

### **St Bertoline's Bread**

Legend tells that the Devil appeared to St Bertoline at Barrow Hill on the site of this church and challenged him to turn stone into bread. Instead he turned bread into stone.

## **The Barthomley Massacre**

### **The Fire**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1643, Royalist troops marched on Barthomley and twenty locals blockaded themselves in the church tower. The Cavaliers lit a fire and smoked them out.

### **The Massacre**

The villagers were promised quarter and surrendered but were stripped naked by the troops and twelve men were massacred at the base of the tower within the church itself. It became one of the most notorious events of the Civil War.

## **The Two Counties**

### **Cheshire**

Barthomley lies in the south-east corner of Cheshire. The wheat represents the county's primary industry and evidence of agriculture can be traced back to 4000BC.

### **Staffordshire**

Balterley lies over the county line in Staffordshire. It was part of the parish until 1866 and the benefice remains united with Barthomley. The knot is from the de Stafford family.

## **Church Life & The Lady Bishop**

### **The Bells**

St Bertoline's has a peal of eight bells dating back to 1743 whose chimes can be heard throughout the year. The tower ceiling opens in the centre to allow the bells to be lowered down and repaired.

### **The Organ Pipes**

The pipes represent the musical life of St Bertoline's. The highly successful choir is affiliated to the Royal School of Church Music and performs 4-part choral music every Sunday with our accomplished organists.

### **The Lady Bishop**

The Right Reverend Libby Lane was consecrated as Bishop of Stockport on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015 at York Minster and became the first female bishop in the Church of England.