

Fearn Abbey and Nigg linked with Tarbat – Parish profile:

Fearn Abbey and Nigg linked with Tarbat in the Presbytery of Ross are in east Ross-shire approximately 40 miles north of Inverness, the closest town is Tain about 10 minutes' drive from the manse. There is a local bus service linking the villages to Tain and beyond, Fearn railway station is two miles from the village.

Inverness has excellent shopping, leisure facilities, cinemas and theatres, and the area general hospital, Raigmore is on the south side of the city. More locally the villages have smaller shops, while Tain has supermarkets and a wide variety of local shops and services, a large modern health centre, and the secondary school, Tain Royal Academy. www.tainroyalacademy.org.uk

Although the parishes are in a predominately rural area, with many large farms, the main employers are the Nigg yard and graving dock recently upgraded to serve the oil and gas industry, renewables, and the Nigg Skills Academy for training a re- training local people. Cromarty Firth Port Authority in Invergordon supports similar industries on a smaller scale and is one of the regular ports of call for large cruise ships. The area also has a vibrant tourist industry due to its history, archaeological digs, scenery, excellent golf courses, outdoor activities and the many galas and annual events throughout the region, creating service industry jobs in hotels, guest houses, restaurants and other tourist locations.

There are local primary schools in Fearn, Portmahomack (where Tarbat Church is located) and Hilton with many youth organisations and sports groups.

There is a smaller hospital at Invergordon which also provides some outpatient support. There are residential homes for the elderly in most of the local towns with home support as an option.

Over and above the Church of Scotland congregations there other denominations, Free and United Free churches, Free Church Continuing, Associated Presbyterian and Roman Catholic etc. Relations with all of these are friendly and amicable with some shared services, and attendance at events in their various churches.

The Church of Scotland Manse is near Fearn Abbey; on the main route to Portmahomack, it is an attractive 20th Century building which has had significant investment in recent years and has an ongoing maintenance and redecoration programme in place, a family house which sits back from the road with an open outlook surrounded by a large walled garden.

These attached links will give you further information about the area.

<http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/balintore/fearnabbey/>

<http://www.fearnpeninsula.org.uk/communities-nigg.html>

The linked churches are in very different settings; described here separately by members of their congregations:

The Fearn Abbey and Nigg Parish includes the communities of Hilton, Balintore and Shandwick (the Seaboard Villages) plus the many farms, cottages and hamlets in the area. Nigg Old Church in Nigg Village is no longer used on a regular basis but has special historic significance for the area.

The congregation currently has 56 members and 85 adherents; the Kirk Session has 9 elders, and the board 8, 6 of which are elders.

Sunday Worship is at 11.30 after the Tarbat Service.

There is a prayer group and bible study group, active support for local street pastors and the Tain Youth Cafe.

There is also participation in the Easter Ross Inter Church Group.

Fearn Abbey and Nigg has a long standing link with the hospital at Ekwendeni, Malawi, which Ross-shire presbytery has now joined.

There is a very active work group of 12 ladies, who support many causes and charities both locally and farther afield, with fundraising and practical support, ongoing fellowship and donations to all including the church.

More recently a small banner group came together to provide seasonal and inspirational banners for the Abbey, and to enjoy fellowship.

Unfortunately we do not currently have a Sunday school and this is something we all miss and hope can start again. However we do rent our hall to an after school group 'the Stickies' and encourage them to join our services.

We participate in the Blytheswood Care Trust activities, and support the local food banks and the shoebox appeal.

We pray that going forwards we can develop our involvement with schools, homes and other groups. While we have joined others in a celebration of events such as 'the Passover' in a local hall, other social events have lapsed and a connection with the local population has deteriorated because of this.

The broad aims of the Congregational Board and Kirk Session for the near future include but are not limited to:

- Outreach
- Fellowship
- Stewardship

Parish Profile – Tarbat

The Parish of Tarbat is in a unique geographic position at the end of the Easter Ross Peninsula and we enjoy many visitors during the summer months. Within the Parish are the three villages of Portmahomack and Rockfield (one mile apart) and Inver six miles away. Three miles on the far side of Portmahomack (the Port as it is known locally) is Tarbatness Lighthouse which is a popular area for walking and seeing wild life. We also enjoy spectacular sunsets over the Dornoch Firth which are a favourite with photographers as we are the only village on the east coast of Scotland that faces due west.

This is a lovely area of the Highlands and there is a beautiful sandy beach in the Port, one village shop and Post Office, one hotel, 2 Cafes, one Restaurant and a Nine Hole Golf Course. The village halls in both the Port and Inver are places of activity and getting together. The village of Inver has a population of 400 and the Port and Rockfield have a combined population of about 600. More information can be found on portmahomackcommunity.org.uk

There is a Primary School in both Portmahomack and Inver but the Secondary School and the Health Centre are both located in Tain which is 10 miles away from the Port and 5 miles from the Manse.

The main Church building is situated in the centre of Portmahomack and there is a Meeting House in Inver. The Manse is six miles away close to Fearn Abbey.

At present there is a morning service in the Port at 10.00 a.m. each Sunday, and an evening service in Inver at 6.30 p.m. the second and fourth Sundays in the month.

We are a small but committed congregation and we try to reach into the ever changing needs of our community. Within the Church there is a Ladies Circle held in the Inver Meeting House and a Guild meeting held monthly in the Port. There is also a Prayer meeting at 8.30 on Saturday mornings. As a congregation we support Blytheswood Care and the Local Food Bank, Malawi, Water Aid, Open Doors and Street Pastors.

We enjoy a good working relationship with the Primary School and Nursery in Portmahomack

Two of our members serve as Street Pastors in Tain. This is a work which involves the members of many local churches working together so they can help and get to know the young people.

Each summer there is a Gala in Portmahomack and this event is opened with a Pier head Service which is usually conducted jointly by the Minister of our Church and the Minister of the Free Church (Continuing) which is the only other church in the Parish.

The present position in the Church is as follows:-

Elders 6 Board Members 1 Members 46 Adherents 58

Photo of Tarbat Church of Scotland in Portmahomack with Dornoch Firth

