

# United Benefice of Burwash, Burwash Weald and Etchingham







## **Section 2: The Diocese and Deanery**

Our benefice lies far to the east of Chichester, so falls under the Bishop of Lewes. The rural deanery of Dallington is relatively large in area but mostly sparsely populated.

Members of our congregations have been elected to the Deanery and Diocesan Synods. One is Lay Chairman of the deanery and Vice-Lay Chairman of the Diocesan Synod. We enjoy a close relationship with our mother church.

The wide range of traditions within the deanery is a great strength enabling incumbents and priests in charge, together with lay people, to develop the church in this area.

We would like you actively to support deanery work and unity.

## **Section 3: Our vision as a United Benefice**

**Our vision is to spread the knowledge and love of God throughout the benefice and beyond:**

- We aspire to spread the good news of God's love and salvation, and to offer spiritual comfort to those who crave it.
- We try, with informed and prayerful concern for others, to set a Christian example.
- These are central and inclusive churches. Our worship is vibrant and varied to suit a spectrum of views. But we are open to improvement, especially in order to attract others.
- We aim to be accessible, welcoming and responsive to all. We aspire to build on our strong lay teams.
- Part of our congregations is very elderly and there is a care home in our benefice. We aim to continue our support for elderly, sick or disabled people, working with other agencies involved.
- We work with the local community and share in many of their activities. We wish to build on this and show everyone through outreach that their parish churches are there for them.
- We should strengthen our friendship with neighbouring churches of other denominations, such as the Roman Catholic Church in Burwash and Churches Together in Heathfield & District.
- As Christians we should accept a social and moral responsibility to neighbouring communities and those overseas. Supporting Christian charities is important.
- As trustees of the churches, we have a duty of care to manage our affairs responsibly.

## **Section 4: The Rector we need**

Our new priest will lead the united benefice in the fulfilment of our vision set out in Section 3 above.

We are looking for a person who is able to provide leadership, teaching, training and active pastoral care.

We will ask you at interview how you see your style of ministry developing here and how you intend to involve the people of our villages. Examples of your successes in this would be helpful.

Our churchmanship is central. We believe our parishes need a flexible, open and inclusive approach to worship and you should be enthusiastic that the church meets the needs of young families, children and young people, continuing the strong links with the primary schools.

You may be invited as Rector to sit on the board of governors for both Voluntary Controlled CEP schools. At the same time, you should recognize the valuable resources contributed by older congregations.

### **We are looking for a new incumbent who is:**

- A spiritual shepherd who will by preaching and teaching encourage and inspire the congregation.
- Approachable; willing to be widely known and visible in the communities.
- A good communicator and listener, committed to sharing the gospel and inspiring others to participate in church life.
- Comfortable engaging with children and young people in the wider community.
- Adept at identifying talents and encouraging volunteers and teamwork.
- Serious about safeguarding.
- Interested in forms of worship both traditional and more contemporary, and who will support and lead us in finding new ways of worshipping with music and the creative arts.
- Able to contribute to the management of church finances, with an interest in the church buildings and the churchyards and who will support work to maintain them.
- Able to drive.
- A user of modern digital communications and methods.



## Section 5: The three parishes

### Burwash

A very warm welcome to St Bartholomew's Church, Burwash.

#### About the parish

Burwash is a beautiful and historic village in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, approximately 12 miles north of the seaside town of Hastings. It runs along an east-west ridge and is about one and a half miles long with several residential roads running off the ridge both north and south.

It has a population of around 2,700 (including Burwash Common), ranging from families with young children to the retired. Many families are long-established in Burwash, although with easy access by rail to London, there have always been quite a number of newcomers settling here.

The high street itself is predominantly traditional East Sussex-style buildings, many with hanging tiles and weatherboarding, and is a mixture of houses, cottages and shops. There is some local authority housing, private rented property and social housing. A private nursing home lies on the outskirts, between Burwash and Etchingham.

Burwash has a range of shops including a butcher, a general stores (incorporating a Post Office), a hairdresser, an antiques shop, a tea room, two pubs both with accommodation and a petrol station and grocery outlet. We also have a modern health centre and dispensary with a full range of facilities. There is a community fire station with retained fire crews.

Our most famous resident (so far!) was Rudyard Kipling, whose house, Bateman's, is now owned by the National Trust and brings many visitors to the area. You will find references to his work in many house names in the area.

Burwash is very fortunate to have a thriving Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, with which St Bartholomew's has long had a close relationship. The OFSTED rating is currently outstanding.

The school is close and many of the 167 children walk through the churchyard daily. The head-teacher values and actively supports the links between the church and the school and wishes to build on these further. Two Foundation Governors are nominated by the PCC and give a school report at PCC meetings. Other members of the congregation are also governors.



Previous rectors held a number of special services with the school each year, as well as providing religious education advice and sitting on the governing body. There are three well-regarded community colleges within a few miles of Burwash, as well as several private primary and secondary schools.

### **About Burwash church as a building**

St Bartholomew's is a charming and historic 11th century Norman church which was substantially enlarged in the 19th century.

It holds 224 people, plus 35 in the choir stalls. Gas-fired central heating was installed in 2003 and there is a sound system. There is a two-manual organ and a peal of eight bells (the oldest made in 1714) which are rung regularly.



The church is well maintained. Following the quinquennial review in 2018, the majority of the roof has been retiled.

In 2010 the church walls were re-pointed, the tower was renovated and the spire covered in new oak shingles. In 2015 the interior was completely redecorated.

We are blessed in Burwash with a large number of people who actively support the maintenance of St Bartholomew's in addition to our two highly committed churchwardens. The Friends of St Bartholomew's was set up a few years ago to fund-raise specifically for the maintenance of the church and their work is supplemented by the fund-raising committee of the PCC.

In addition former residents of the parish have bequeathed substantial Funds, the interest from which is mostly used for maintaining the building. A group of parishioners and a contractor keep the churchyard in good order, the 'Holy Dusters' see that the church is kept clean and flower arrangers that it looks attractive.

In normal times, the church is open daily and is popular with visitors to the area and parishioners alike.



The following quotes are from the visitors' book:

***"Beautiful church and beautifully kept churchyard, full of quiet reverence."***

*Robert & Clarry, Exmouth*

***"Lovely church, really lovely feeling of peace and joy."***

*Steve and Viv, Brighton*

***"Very welcoming, lovely service, kind and friendly congregation."***

*Babs, Bexhill*

***"Thank you for leaving your church open. As Roman Catholics we prayed that we all be one."***

*Tony & Maria, Essex*

St Bartholomew's does not have a church hall, but when the new rectory was built in 2001 the design included a 'parish room' separated from the private living quarters. This is used regularly by the Sunday Club and occasionally for other meetings such as the PCC.

We very much want the church to be seen as an integral part of life in Burwash and the building has hosted many community and fund-raising events, including an annual Christmas tree festival, flower festivals, concerts, talks and lectures. Refreshments are served after services and during other events.







One regular outreach activity is the Tuesday Drop-In session. Children drop in to the church on their way to school for a drink, biscuits and a chat. Having left their children at school, parents, carers and toddlers can then come back in for coffee and a snack. We are very conscious that the future of the church and our community lies with young people and the Tuesday Drop-In is often an initial step into the church and has led on to baptisms and participation in the life of the church.

Another weekly event is the 3C's 'coffee, cake and chat' which has been popular in recent years. This kind of outreach activity is something which we are keen to expand and we would welcome your fresh ideas and enthusiasm.

### **About the church as people**

In a Deanery which has Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical churches, St Bartholomew's is probably best described as having a liberal, catholic, middle-church tradition with an inclusive approach. We aim to welcome all ages and denominations, which is particularly important as,

apart from the Catholic Church of Christ the King, no other denominations have churches nearby.

The electoral roll contains 107 names, some of whom live outside the parish. 'Usual' Sunday morning attendance in the 2019 return was 63 persons. There are typically several children at the family services.

Easter and Christmas attendance remains strong, especially for the carol service. We are delighted that so many people in the parish – even those who are not regular church-goers – feel St Bartholomew's is their church and it is the natural choice for weddings, blessings, baptisms and funerals.

Apart from our two churchwardens, we have a good team of lay support. This includes lay assistants of communion, servers, sacristans, organist/music and worship co-ordinator, choir, sidesmen and lesson readers.

And, as already mentioned, we have a dedicated group of bell ringers, enthusiastic and creative flower arrangers and the all important Holy Dusters.



The current pattern of services is:

- Each Sunday at 8am, Holy Communion from the Book of Common Prayer. Then a rotating pattern at 10am of Family Service, sung BCP Matins, Family Communion and Parish Communion. We hold sung BCP Evensong once a month and said Holy Communion on Thursdays. When there is a fifth Sunday, the three parishes meet for a united service.

Major festivals and special services generally have large congregations. The Sunday Club nativity play on Christmas Day is particularly popular.



The Remembrance Sunday service is another very special occasion in the village, with a parade led by the Royal British Legion and supported by the Heathfield Silver Band, Scouts, Guides and Brownies, fire fighters and representatives from the Roman Catholic church of Christ the King.

On these occasions it is standing room only in the church.

There is a Saturday morning prayer group in the church where people can go for coffee, a chat and prayers. A Lent Group forms to follow a theme each year.

The Sunday Club and Pathfinders, which cater for children from three years upwards, meet on the second and fourth Sunday of each month in the parish room in the rectory. Sometimes the children then walk through Church Field (which is owned by the PCC) on a path linking the rectory to the church and give a short presentation on what they have been learning.

Family services are short, informal services that are structured to involve and appeal to children and families. Modern songs of praise are chosen and most people stay for a while after the service for refreshments.

These activities do help to bring young people into the church, but there is still a great deal more we need to do to attract and keep young people coming – and in particular, older children. Some fresh thinking in this area would be very welcome.



### About the church and the community

There's a lot going on in Burwash. The village hall is host to everything from dancing classes to pantomime, with plenty of social clubs for young and old in between.

We're also lucky enough to benefit from a large playing field (with a children's play area) and a modern sports pavilion. Between these three amenities, the community is able to enjoy a wide range of sporting and social activities and St Bartholomew's is heavily involved in many of these.

For example, the large annual village fair held on August bank holiday includes both the village hall and St Bartholomew's running stalls and activities. The Harvest Supper, held in the village hall, is open to everyone.

Church and community activity is published in the Burwash village magazine monthly. It is distributed by a team of volunteers and sold in village shops.

The Rector has customarily made pastoral visits to the nearby nursing home and to give Holy Communion. Many other infirm and unwell parishioners very much appreciate such ministry as well. An idea that could be developed is for a team to make some of these visits.

Financial assistance for educational and social activities for young people within the parishes of Burwash and Burwash Common is available through the Barnsley Trust, which is managed by trustees.

There is an active branch of the Royal British Legion in the village which organises a biennial pilgrimage to visit war graves of Burwash men in Europe and the Rector is customarily Honorary Chaplain to the branch.



There are several special services as a result of the close relationship with the primary school – for example Harvest Festival, school carol service, and an annual leavers’ service, which bring parents into the church. The children themselves set up a Christian Values Group which meets in the church. Decisions taken by that group (which includes the Rector) are built into the school improvement plan.

St Bartholomew’s has links with a number of charitable organisations. For example, families are invited to bring toys to the annual Toy and Crib service; these are then given to the Chichester Diocesan Association for Family Support Work (FSW). Food from the food bank and donations at Harvest Festival also go to FSW.

Collections from the annual Christingle service are sent to The Children’s Society. Coffee mornings and book sales have supported various causes. We regularly donate to Churches Together in Heathfield, and have in recent times answered appeals from Emmaus, Unicef UK and DEC.

The parish has a close relationship with the Roman Catholic Church of Christ the King, which is also in the village. Personal relationships between the staff of the two parishes is good and we have held a number of joint services and activities together over the years. We are eager to build on all the good things mentioned above and become even more accessible, welcoming and responsive to all.

#### **Context for the ministry:**

The Burwash PCC has a number of committees, which meet as needed:

- Ministry Team
- Standing – day to day management of the church
- Worship Group
- Communications Group
- Fund-raising – plans and arranges social events
- Young People’s Group – co-ordinates all aspects of youth activities
- Sunday Club – plans and arranges the monthly programme to ensure a fit with Lectionary themes
- Safeguarding – our safeguarding representative reviews and manages our safeguarding policy and training.

The finances of the parish are well managed. Congregational planned giving and collections, together with fund-raising, enable us to cover all our current annual expenses and 100% of the ever-increasing parish share.

The occasional appeal for an extraordinary project is usually supported enthusiastically by the parish and the wider community.

The recent retiling of the roof did involve the use of reserves in addition to an appeal, and the loss of income during the Covid epidemic will almost certainly cause further depletion of reserves.





### **The rectory**

A substantial new rectory was built in 2001. The four-bedroom house is set in a quiet cul-de-sac on the outskirts of the village and is in good repair. It has a moderately sized garden, with a gate leading to Church Field and the path to the church (less than 5 minutes' walk). The views across the Dudwell valley are stunning.







## **Burwash Weald**

**A very warm welcome to St Philip's Church, Burwash Weald.**

### **About St Philip's**

St Philip's plays a key role in the life of our parish community, providing support, comfort and guidance, reaching out to the elderly, the sick and dying as well as to the younger members of the parish. St Philip's is active in strengthening the links within the wider community and with local groups as well as furthering the Christian message.

St Philip's has a small Pastoral Team, Associate Vicar, supported by his wife Rev Julia Lewis, a Parochial Church Council of eight as well as a caring and committed wider community.

The pastoral care of the parish, visiting the sick and the bereaved and responding to the spiritual needs of their parishioners are well served.

Safeguarding is paramount in our philosophy and we actively support and promote the SQP.

St Philip's has a four bedroom house for duty and a disabled toilet.

St Philip's practices a sound financial management and is currently paying 100% of its Parish Share. Quinquennial works have been completed and the fabric of the church is in good order.

St Philip's offers a warm, relaxed welcome and provides a range of different services to meet the needs of all. St Philip's provides the inspiration that reaches out to a wider congregation within the parish of Burwash Weald. We achieve this through:

- The teaching and example of our Associate Vicar and his Wife
- Engagement with all age groups to join in the fellowship and love of God's Church
- Our successful and well attended Mother and Toddler group
- Engineering Club for all Children and Parents
- Home Group meets throughout the year
- Bereavement Friendship Group
- Daily Prayer and Special Services using Video uploaded to YouTube
- St Philip's Facebook Page – with a reach of over 120 people
- Very successful Community Magazine
- Home fellowship group at Lent









### Services

Both the Book of Common Prayer and Common Worship are used at St Philip's.

#### Sunday 8.00 am

- Holy Communion BCP (1st, 3rd & 5th Sunday)

#### Sunday 10.30 am

- 1st Sunday: Family Service / Messy Church
- 2nd Sunday: Holy Communion BCP
- 3rd Sunday: Morning Prayer (usually CW)
- 4th Sunday: Holy Communion CW
- 5th Sunday: Various incl. Benefice Service

#### Sunday 10.30 am

- 2nd Sunday: Open Prayer
- 4th Sunday: Choral Evensong (BCP)

The Church is open daily for prayer from 7.45 am.

### Special Services:

- **Palm Sunday** – with local procession from the Wheel Inn
- **Battle of Britain Sunday** – special afternoon service with visitors from other parishes
- **Harvest Festival**
- **Remembrance Sunday** – service supported by Royal British Legion, Parish Council, Girl Guides etc. around village war memorial located in the churchyard
- **Christmas Carols & Lessons** by candlelight
- **Crib Service** – Children's Service and Nativity
- **Christingle Service** – Epiphany service for children
- **Pet Service** – Held every September
- **Patronal Festival and Founders' Day** held on St Philip's Sunday and followed by a Parish BBQ.







## Our Community

Burwash Weald and Common are under the local government of Burwash Parish Council within the Rural District of Rother, as an ecclesiastical parish of 1200 people. There are 74 people on the Electoral Roll of St Philip's.

The parish school closed in 1963. This means that children attend schools outside Burwash Common and Weald which means that it is a challenge to attract young people to St. Philip's.

The parish boasts a Pavilion/Community Centre, a Girl Guide Company with their own headquarters, Cricket, Stool ball, Billiards and Snooker teams, Ladies' After Eight Club, Masonic Lodge and a Residents' Association. All these groups help to make a thriving community in this rural area.

The Market town of Heathfield is 3 miles distant and the parish is set roughly midway between Tunbridge Wells to the north and Eastbourne on the coast to the south. The parish of St Philip's is situated in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which affords magnificent views across the rolling countryside.

## The Burwash Common and Weald Parish

It was in 1864 that the Misses Georgiana, Emily and Sophia Trower settled in Burwash Common, buying a farm now known as Buckles. It did not take the Trower sisters long to realise that the area comprised of the hamlets of Witherenden, Burwash Weald and Burwash Common were without spiritual guidance and education.

Although the area boasted a Wesleyan chapel built in 1843, people had to travel as best they could to St Bartholomew's in Burwash for Church of England services.

It was to this end that the three sisters had a mission to build a church and in 1867 consecration of St Philip's took place. Originally the church was a chapel at ease, but in 1877 St Philip's was formed into a new ecclesiastical district created out of parts of Burwash, Heathfield and Mayfield.

During the last 29 years the parish being served by NSM/house-for-duty clergy when not in Interregnum. St. Philip's has been fortunate in having Non Stipendiary Ministers that have guided and helped to retain its congregation and our Associate Vicar has been very active in engaging with the Community.

The parish traditionally had a mainly rural agricultural base, but over time this has become less important as a source of employment, with many people now commuting daily to London or working in mainly service industries. The parish also has a substantial retired population, but there is a strong support for the mission that was begun by the Trower family nearly 150 years ago.







## **Etchingham**

**A very warm welcome to The Assumption of Blessed Mary & St Nicholas, Etchingham**

### **About the Parish**

Etchingham is a rural parish, situated in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, at the meeting point of the Rivers Rother, Dudwell and Limden.

The village centre only developed from Victorian times when the railway to Hastings came through the valley a station was built where it crosses what has become our High Street (the A265).

The rivers and their regular flooding limit development, so the core of the village remains relatively small, and is still surrounded by an essentially medieval patchwork landscape, with its pattern of small fields, old hedges, numerous ponds, flood plain meadows and patches of ancient woodland.

Our Neighbourhood Plan Survey showed that parishioners set the highest possible value upon the beauties of our landscape and wildlife.

The rail and road links mean that we are to a significant extent a commuter village with people

travelling outside of the parish to work. Though our village general store has now closed (replaced by a cake-making business), we still have a Post Office/ newsagents and a butcher.

The most important recent development is a fine new community complex, built in 2014, combining our Etchingham Church of England School with a much-loved pre-school and playing fields, and incorporating two halls, which are shared with the community.

The community contribution, as both a stake-holder and driving force in the development, has resulted in fine premises. The larger hall, shared between the School and the community, has tiered bleacher seating for theatre and lectures.

The School actively fosters Christian values: members of the PCC and congregation are key Governors; and though the Rector of the Parish is not automatically a Governor, he or she would be expected to visit regularly, hold assemblies, and strengthen its Christian outlook.

This new development, extending the village envelope and including 21 new houses, has enlarged the community, and brought in new families.





### Parish Life

Etchingham is a friendly and welcoming village. Neighbours help and check upon each other and this has been particularly evident during the lockdown. In normal times, there are many ways to meet others locally, including of course walking a dog in the beautiful countryside. Sadly, the pub closed many years ago, but the Etchingham Club is the centre for the village cricket club and snooker and billiards teams, with regular live music events.

Part of the old station has been turned into a popular Bistro, including an outdoor drinking and dining area in the former station master's garden.

Bookings in the two village halls show the range of clubs and activities on offer, for all ages from Parent and Toddler Group through to exercise sessions for those with limited mobility. Yoga, Pilates, Badminton Zumba and Walking Football are on offer, with village clubs ranging from the Brownies to the Rother District Ladies.

The church however organizes many of the events that bring the whole village together – not just the Bring and Buy coffee mornings and plant sales, which are the staple of all church fundraisers. Our Church also produces the Parish Magazine, and organises the

Etchingham Flower and Dog Show, the Harvest Supper and Quiz, and the hugely popular Etchingham Christmas play, whose proceeds go to charity. The last Rector gamely acted in this; but it will not be a mandatory part of his or her job description!

The same faithful few from our congregation can be found serving in many other aspects of village life, from setting up the Trust for building our new Village Halls to drawing up our Neighbourhood Plan. The Church is, as it should be, part of the social fabric of the village, but feels stretched very thin.







### About the Church Building

The Assumption of Blessed Mary and St Nicholas is one of the finest churches in the county. It is Grade I listed, and included by Simon Jenkins as one of his "Thousand Best Churches in England." Praised by Pevsner as a "complete fourteenth century job", it is largely unaltered since it was built between 1360-70.

The memorial brasses to the founder, Sir William de Etchingham, and to his son, daughter-in-law and grandson are notable. The eighteen stalls in the chancel have magnificent pairs of 14th century misericords, including a satire upon an evil priest, shown as a robed fox preaching to six geese (a converse job-description); and the spire is topped by a brass weather vane that has claims to be the oldest in England.

In the autumn of 2000, the church was flooded, with the water reaching a depth of 3-4 feet in the nave. The Church was closed for five months; but is now fully restored; and new flood defences downriver reduce the likelihood of it happening again.



Our Quinquennial architect insists that the Church is in relatively good condition overall, and it was re-decorated four years ago; however constant repairs are natural and necessary in any building of this age. Death Watch Beetle was very recently discovered: its depredations are

apparently not too extensive ("I've seen worse" said the architect); but will of course have to be dealt with.



The heating does not give the warmest of welcomes in the winter months.

The War Memorial is Grade 2 listed. It was designed by Herbert Baker, and unveiled by Rudyard Kipling.

In normal times, the congregation manages not only to keep the building in repair, and to pay its current Parish Share in full, but also to give to the various charities to which we are committed.

However, since repairing the church roof, recovering from the flood and now Covid, we are at present at full stretch: we are still fulfilling our commitments, but with no reserves at all to fall back upon.







### About the Congregation

Our last Rector described our congregations as being “small” but “exceptionally faithful”: all the members of the congregation come every week, almost without fail.

The problem we face is that most of us are not young. There are now only two families with young children who attend (and those are the children and grandchildren of the Churchwardens).

Of course, the fact that the majority of the congregation are of a similar generation does not mean that we share the same views about an ideal service. There are undoubtedly some who hanker after the BCP, but with only one service a week sadly this cannot be catered for.

What we do however all share very strongly is a realisation of the need to reach out to the next generation of churchgoers in Etchingham. The families are there: they throng the Church of England School gates, and flock to School Carol Services and School Leavers services in the Church; but this needs to be translated into regular worship.

Though we need an evangelical Rector in the true sense of the word, we do not sit in a “happy-clappy” tradition. Our churchmanship is middle-of-the-road. High Church ritual can be enriching, and certainly can be used to draw a congregation; but it is certainly not in itself our prime requirement. It is the spirit behind the forms of service that we seek.

What we would like is what one member of our PCC called “traditional with a twist”. We want someone who can breathe new life into the familiar traditions, and give a fresh slant to great ancient truths. Our hoped-for qualities in a new incumbent would start with the obvious: kindness, and all the pastoral strengths that entails – approachability, care of the sick, and the ability

to appreciate the needs of both young and old. These are core qualities.

Etchingham would, however, rank outreach equally high – starting with the ability to connect with the untapped potential in the village. From that, our church would be strengthened to reach out towards the wider world in Christian charity. We genuinely seek to enlarge our horizons, and to think again about the place of the Church in the world; but need to start by enlarging our congregation.

Since 2012, our services within the United Benefice have been taken by a rota of visiting retired clergy from outside the parish, with only one service a month held by our Rector. We appreciate and are very grateful to all of them; and it is perhaps a plus to say that we are as a result open to different styles of preaching, even enjoying the variety.

Nonetheless, during this period very few new members joined the congregation, which dwindled through natural attrition. To reverse this, we need a priest we can feel is truly ours, even though shared with the other parishes: one who has the gift of forging new connections of friendship within the village, through the school and village events as well as through Church services.



Designed by:



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