

PARISH PROFILE  
The Parish of Pevensey



St Nicolas Pevensey



St Wilfrid Pevensey Bay

## SUMMARY

Pevensey Parish has a population of approximately 3,200, with a small number living in the historical village of Pevensey and the majority along the coastal strip of Pevensey Bay, which adjoins the Sovereign Harbour development. It is served by two churches, both within the sacramental tradition but with distinctive styles of worship.

We are seeking a priest who can work collaboratively with our church neighbours to care for our communities and facilitate growth both spiritually and numerically. He/she should be open to the opportunities presented by large numbers of visitors and a growing population along the coast. St Wilfrid's has plenty of on-site free parking, and there is also ample off-site parking for St Nicolas.

In consideration of the future of our parish, the PCC met on two separate away-days, dedicated to producing a realistic Mission Action Plan, taking into account our strengths and weaknesses. (Attached)

## THE BROADER CONTEXT

Although there has been a nationwide decline in church attendance, exacerbated by COVID-19 and the downturn in the economy, there are encouraging signs of growth, especially in St Wilfrid's. It is here that past members have returned to the church, and new members have started to attend.

Pevensey is on the Eastern edge of Eastbourne Deanery, but even so the parish has been involved with a number of Deanery and town-wide initiatives, most notably *Inspiring Angels* (a successful outreach project last Advent/Christmas to be repeated this year), and a united seafront outreach project. The parish continues to work with neighbouring churches, and for the last 2 years a Good Friday Procession of Witness has taken place, which was shared with the Baptist Church in Pevensey Bay.

From September 2021 a parish partnership was created with St Luke's Stone Cross with the vicar becoming Priest in Charge at Pevensey. The well-appointed vicarage lies within the parish of St Luke's, in North Langney.

The parish of Pevensey (and also, therefore, of Stone Cross) moved into vacancy in April 2023 and currently has support from an Associate Vicar (NSM), a Licensed Lay Reader and an Honorary Assistant Priest. The Associate Vicar was appointed in September 2021 primarily to care for St Wilfrid's, and she has a small office there. However, since moving into vacancy all members of the ministry team are involved with both churches.

## THE VICAR WE NEED

We would like our new Vicar to be forward looking, to lead us confidently on his/her path, while able to recognise the traditions which have existed in Pevensey for many years.

Leadership which is both innovative and collaborative would be gladly welcomed by the PCC, the people and assisting ministers.

We see the pastoral care of parishioners as being of primary importance, currently undertaken by our Associate Vicar, Licensed Lay Minister and Honorary Assistant Priest. Our aim is to show to our communities the love of God, both in service and in care, and we are in need of leadership that would provide a structure to our pastoral care.

Our new priest would understand that the Sacramental worship of the churches in Pevensey is held in high esteem by the congregations.

The new Vicar will be comfortable with the inclusive nature of our approach to those who visit our churches. It is our policy never to exclude any who might come to enquire. (The Church of England safeguarding policy is applied and up to date).

## ABOUT THE PARISH

### The Parish boundaries

The Parish of Pevensey (Population 3,200) includes the small, historic village of Pevensey which is located on the edge of the Pevensey Levels, three miles east of Eastbourne. Pevensey is surrounded by the open countryside of the Coastal Levels and is dominated by the Castle, which attracts a large number of visitors. To the north and east of the village, the wetlands of the Pevensey Levels Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), form an area of immense wildlife value. The village retains much of its historic interest, with a significant



number of listed buildings including the Norman Castle and recently acquired 14<sup>th</sup> century Mint House, with plans to restore it to its former grandeur. The 800 year old Parish Church of St. Nicolas lies back from the main street and provides Sunday worship based on the *Book of Common Prayer*.





Pevensay Bay was an old fishing village founded in the 1600's as Wallsend – that is the east end of the Sea Wall from Eastbourne. William (the Conqueror) landed in Pevensay in 1066, reputed to have been in what was then a naturally occurring coastal harbour, lying behind the castle. The land between Pevensay and Pevensay Bay gradually silted up and now

lies approximately ½ a mile south of the village of Pevensay, behind the Shingle beach.

Holiday homes which had sprung up along Eastbourne Rd in Pevensay Bay have, over the years, been replaced by more sturdy brick built houses which command high prices.

Pevensay Bay has grown in popularity as a seaside resort and as a result a number of caravan parks and holiday homes have been established, so the population is increased during the holiday season.

From 1930 housing development was beginning to be developed with the building of a large estate of bungalows known as *Beachlands*. This estate is a now well-established residential area of distinctive, sought-after properties. At about the same time bungalows were built along the beach mainly as holiday homes. These have now been almost entirely replaced by brick-built houses which command high prices. Pevensay Bay has grown in popularity as a seaside resort and as a result a number of caravan parks and holiday homes have been established, all of which swells the population during the holiday season.



## Demography

Pevensay village has a population of approximately 200 people, many of whom have ancestors who lived in the village for generations and who were buried in the St Nicolas churchyard. The age range of this population is mixed but there are fewer children and young people than the national average. 'Due to Pevensay village and its immediate proximity, being a conservation area, housing development within it is restricted, although there are many new housing developments in its surroundings. It is only the sale of existing properties that brings newcomers to the village. The 2021 Census records the population of Pevensay Bay as 2,887 but this increases during holiday periods. In the late 1990s the building of Sovereign Harbour began, with the creation of a marina and three harbours. Sovereign Harbour lies along the Sea front, off Pevensay Bay Road, and lies just outside the parish. Several residents of Sovereign Harbour attend our Sunday services. New houses and holiday homes are also being built along Pevensay Bay Road.

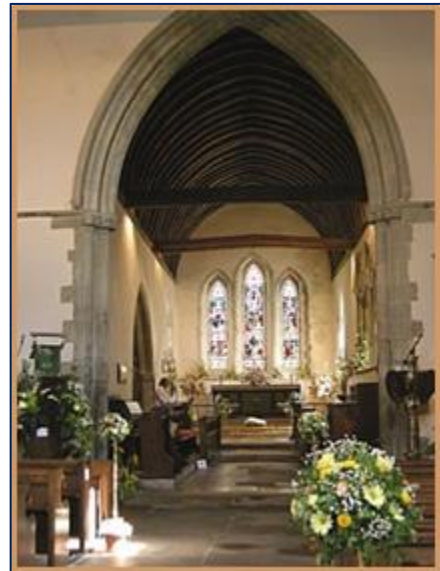
## ABOUT THE CHURCHES

### Church & Worship

Pevensey Parish comprises two churches, both in the sacramental tradition. Although having distinct styles of worship the churches have a united service twice a year – at their respective churches, for their respective Patronal Festivals.

#### St Nicolas

St Nicolas is a beautiful Grade 1 listed historic building. It has been a place of peace, prayer and pilgrimage for 800 years. It is a perfect venue for a traditional style of worship with an excellent acoustic quality. The old pipe organ has recently been replaced by a state-of-the-art digital organ which is regularly played by our organist. The *Book of Common Prayer* service of Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday, and includes choir and incense. We have a team of bell ringers who ring before the Sunday morning Communion and at weddings and funerals. There is a small, mainly elderly, but committed regular congregation, some coming from outside the parish, who appreciate the High Anglican style of worship. Given the church's location, history and beauty, there is a constant stream of visitors who come all days of the week and there is real potential for developing mid-week services. The very well-used Prayer Tree and Visitors' Book testify to their spiritual searching. Saints Days, Remembrance Sunday, and the Easter and Christmas services are also celebrated at St. Nicolas'. Attendance at services has varied since Covid-19. Average attendance during the first 9 months of this year (2023) has been 27 for the Sunday Holy Communion service (see addendum).



#### St Wilfrid

St Wilfrid's Church and hall, in the centre of the village of Pevensey Bay, was built in 1969 and boasts a light, airy environment and beautiful stained glass windows. The church has excellent disabled access and facilities, plus free parking with two disabled spaces.



The environment lends itself to a more informal yet still liturgical style of worship. *Common Worship* contemporary language is used, with seasonal provisions. Music is provided on a modern keyboard and also guitar.

Having the hall as part of the building means a flexible, creative space for quiet days, Lent courses and special interest days, such as 'Contemplate & Create' (a led contemplation followed by artistic activities in the hall).

Many local people gather outside the church at the war memorial for the annual Armistice Day service. Special services for children have also been provided at Christmas.

The growing congregation consists mainly of active retired local people, and attendance at Holy Communion varies with the holiday season, between 20 and 35. The average to date for this year is 26 (please see addendum).

The large hall is frequently let to local organisations for activities and events and is run by a committee which has representatives from the PCC and the local community. The close working relationship between local representatives and members of the church has been beneficial to all.



## THE CHURCH IN THE COMMUNITY



Both churches are central to their respective communities, and offer appropriate events and services. The parish supports local charities, including Foodbank, British Legion, Care & Share, Christian Aid, Children's Society and RNLI.

St Nicolas is a beautiful venue for weddings, funerals and baptisms. It also hosts the very popular annual flower festival which attract visitors from far and wide. St Nicolas provides a yearly programme of summer concerts. The church has been refurbished at times the latest being completed in 2017, following a campaign to raise £250,000.



St Wilfrid's monthly Craft Fairs started 18 months ago and have proved very popular and give welcome contact with both local and wider community. Last winter, the church offered a 'warm space' for people.



As part of her Reader responsibilities, our Reader leads a monthly Bible Study Group at the local pub in Pevensey Bay.

Recently, a series of Parish Outings have been organised making use of the Pevensey Community Bus. These have proved very successful. As part of the Pevensey History

Festival the Church undertook a mini prayer pilgrimage for what it is hoped will be the first of many.

Pevensey & Westham C of E Primary School is inside the neighbouring parish of Westham, but our incumbent would be invited to be a governor there.

We have excellent relations with the Pevensey Town Trust and our local Parish Council and councillors.

We have a regularly updated website ([www.pevenseyparish.org](http://www.pevenseyparish.org)) and a weekly newsletter which is distributed in churches and by email.

## ADDENDUM:

### Pevensey Parish Church Attendance 2013 – 2023

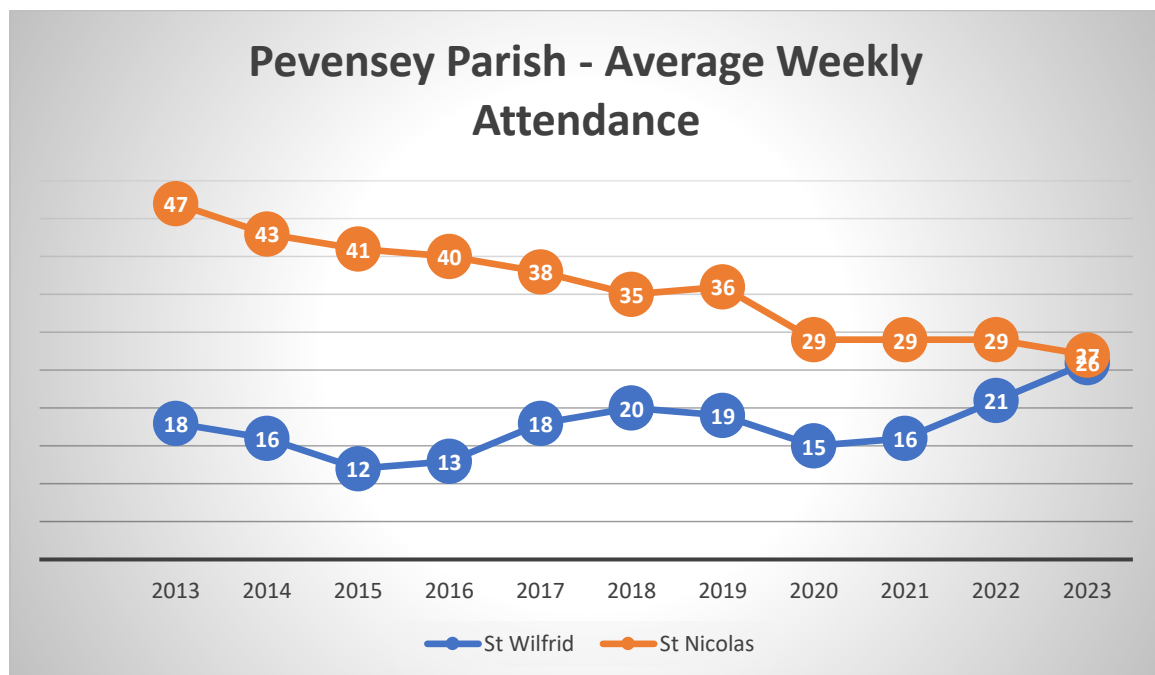
#### Purpose

To review trends in Sunday attendance at St Nicolas' and St Wilfrid's churches.

#### Method

From the service registers, all-age attendance at the principal Sunday services was recorded and averaged for each year from 2013 to the first 9 months of 2023. As the focus was on regular worshippers, major festivals and events (e.g., Remembrance Sunday, baptisms) were excluded.

#### Results



Observations:

*St Nicolas:* Sunday attendance has followed the national trend in C of E attendance in not recovering after Covid lockdowns.

*St Wilfrid:* Sunday attendance has recovered and now stands at an average of 26.

*Overall Attendance:* As a few people attend both services, this puts Pevensey attendance at Sunday services at around 50. A recent national survey estimates that in 2021 only 509,000 people were attending C of E Sunday services (0.9% of the population). Viewed from that perspective, we are somewhat above that national average.

