

Parish Profile

St THOMAS the APOSTLE, CAMBER with St MARY, EAST GULDEFORD

In the Rye Team Ministry, Deanery of Rye, East Sussex



Parish Profile 2023

Our Mission Statement

*We seek to be inclusive,
vibrant and forward-
looking, faithful in
Prayer and Worship
and reaching out to our
village communities in
love and service
'preaching the Kingdom
of God and teaching the
truth about the Lord
Jesus Christ'*

(Acts 28.31)

Proclaiming the Mystery of Faith

In 2025 this diocese celebrates the 950th anniversary of witness and evangelisation from a mission base in Chichester, building on the earlier mission founded by St Wilfrid at Selsey. 2025 also marks the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea with its reminder of the formative claim upon us of the catholic creeds.

These anniversaries are more than historical footnotes. They speak powerfully about the richness of faith and mission that is our inheritance locally and universally.

Inspired by that inheritance, we seek to be a household of faith that is endlessly curious about how the Holy Scriptures and the sacraments of the New Covenant enable us to know, love and follow Jesus Christ in today's noisy and distracted world.

If God is calling you to join us in the task of proclaiming the mystery of faith in some part of this diocese, we pray that the contribution of your gifts and experience will enrich our witness and deepen your own discipleship.

We take very seriously the call to diversity and radical inclusion as characteristic of the Church's mission. For this reason we welcome applications from ordained women and Global Majority Heritage clergy, who are under-represented in those who serve this diocese.

+Martin

Introduction

Camber is a small holiday village lying on the western edge of the Romney Marsh between Rye and Lydd on the coast road. In more recent years Camber has grown from a small coastal village to an all year round holiday destination due to its award-winning sandy beach and dunes. Pontins holiday camp was built in the late sixties to cater for Camber's growing holiday trade. Over the years Parkdean Resort Caravan Park has evolved also catering for holiday makers and holiday home owners. The service industry has had to improve in order to deal with the increased tourism trade. In recent years a new private housing development has been added to the village, the majority of houses are weekend homes.

Traditionally Camber was a resort for South Londoners but we now see a wider base of visitors including many from continental Europe.

There is extensive marsh farmland in the area and some light industry locally. Tourism provides some work in the village itself. There are primary and secondary schools three miles away in Rye and the surrounding area, allocated buses take pupils to the Primary School from Camber and back again at the end of the school day. There are bus links to Rye and Hastings to the west and to Lydd and Dover to the east. The railway station in Rye provides connections to Hastings, Brighton, Gatwick, Ashford and London (London St Pancras 38 minutes). Rye is a 10 minute drive away by car.

East Guldeford

East Guldeford, population around 65, is a small village on the edge of Walland Marsh, two miles from Camber and one mile out of Rye, consisting mainly of sheep pasture and arable land belonging to some nine farming families. It was agreed in 2010 that as part of the Deanery Pastoral Strategy, St. Mary's, East Guldeford would become a Chapel of Ease. This has been completed and a new parish of Camber with East Guldeford was created on 1st January 2012.

Rye Team Ministry

This is headed by the new Team Rector, The Reverend Paul White, and includes the parishes of Rye with Rye Harbour, Camber and East Guldeford, and Playden and Iden. It is anticipated that the successful applicant for this post will be willing to play a part in the life of the whole team and take services (including some occasional offices) around the team as necessary.

Parish Church of St THOMAS the APOSTLE, CAMBER

The Community

Like many seaside neighborhoods, Camber is very dependent on seasonal work, and suffers from some socio-economic deprivation. The local residents are working people and retirees. The village is a ribbon development and includes a private estate of low cost affordable housing, a small estate of social housing and a recently built estate of more expensive homes, Whitesands, mostly used by week-enders or for holidays. There are permanent residents from Whitesands in our regular congregation. There are several shops, three pubs and soon to be a Post Office within the village.

The village population is about 1500, which includes many young families, but in the height of the season, Pontins Holiday Resort accommodates up to 3000 and Parkdean Resorts , caravans and static homes another 3000 people. Added to that, day visitors, mainly from South East London can produce up to 25,000 people on the beach on a hot summer's day!

The Church



The parish church of St Thomas the Apostle is at the western end of the village and was consecrated in 1956. It was built following the destruction of the former church by a flying bomb in 1944.

The building is constructed of brick with a tile roof with a small bell and clock tower that is clad in timber

The interior of the Church is simple white-painted and timbered, and is furnished with chairs rather than pews. It is warm and very welcoming with a good porch area. There is a small vestry. The main body of the Church can seat 80 plus another 20 in the gallery.

There is a good Wyvern electronic organ and Yamaha Clavinova, a speaker system with a TV monitor allowing us to have musical accompaniment to our hymns when there is no organist to play during our worship. There is an audio loop.

The Church is usually open by day to the public and there is no recent history of any security issues.

The Church has no burial ground; however, there is a small Garden of Remembrance.

The Church Hall

The Thomas Longley Hall, built in 1996, is adjacent and connected internally to the Church. It was redecorated in 2018. The Hall is large and well maintained, with well-appointed toilet facilities; a fully equipped kitchen meets with required hygiene standards enabling an accredited preschool to run on the premises. There is a Print Room.

As we explain later on, the Hall has become very much part of the wider community, edges have become blurred, and the facility stops us being just 'a Sunday Church'. By having the Hall the Church can be a real presence in many people's lives, a friendly place, with much coming and going, a familiar place that is joined to a Church.



The Vicarage

The vicarage is a detached chalet bungalow, built in the sixties of brick construction adjacent to the church. It is built to the correct vicarage specification.

The ground floor consists of front door giving access to good sized study and a cloakroom. There is an internal door giving access to the main living quarters consisting of a large kitchen overlooking the back garden, with fitted units, and a good sized larder. Adjacent to the kitchen is a separate utility room on one side and a dining room on the other. At the front of the house is a large, bright lounge with front and side aspect windows and a fireplace. Upstairs there are four double bedrooms, a bathroom

including power shower and a separate WC. The house has oil-fired central heating throughout and a security alarm.

Outside there is a rear garden, and to the side a garage. At the front/side is a good sized garden and tarmac drive with a vehicle turning bay. Both gardens are mainly lawn with a variety of shrubs and an apple tree at the rear. There is a path from the front garden to the church.



The Church Community

There are 29 people on the Electoral Roll. Our services average 15 adults, though this can increase markedly with holiday-makers, we are pleased when the holiday makers bring their children with them often returning each year.

There are two Church Wardens and three lay ministers of Communion supported by a team of sidespeople and two sacristans.

Our small but enthusiastic choir consists of three ladies who assist in leading our worship. They practice on Friday mornings. We do not yet have a regular organist, but there are two volunteer organists who play twice a month for us, sometimes more if they can. When we don't have anyone to play, the hymn tunes are played via the computer and monitor. Our hymn book is 'Hymns Old and New' we use more modern hymns from time to time as well.

Strong links have been developed with the community over the years and we seek ways to reinforce them at every opportunity.

Children at St Thomas the Apostle.

As we don't have any children attending regularly at present, we seek to welcome young children who visit by making toys and books available at the back of the church for their use during the service.

Street Pastors

A team of Street and Prayer Pastors based in Rye was set up in April 2015. Their training sessions take place in the Tom Longley Hall. The Street Pastors are out as a team in Camber every two weeks on a Friday evening going out from the Tom Longley Hall, the Prayers Pastors who are praying for the time that the Street Pastors are working out on the streets will remain in the Hall. The coordinator of the Street Pastors is a member of our church and one member of the congregation is also a street and

prayer pastor. Street Pastors are backed by Churches Together in Rye and so relationships between the Rye and area Churches is strengthened.

Church activities

Prior to covid we were an active Church and, although we did decline during lockdown, we aspire to grow once again. Through special services, events and social occasions in our Hall and in the Parish we wish to reach out into the community in service and in witness.

We contribute church news each month in the Camber Community Newsletter which is delivered to all households in the village. This makes sure that all villagers are informed about our church and what is happening in it.

Annually we hold our Parish Harvest Supper, followed by an auction of produce. It is always a great success, and raises funds for those in need. We support three Filipino children who are part of a feeding and education program run by Biga Church, near Manila. This program additionally prevents vulnerable hungry children from being recruited into ISIS. We have direct contact with this church through two of our own church members who are actively involved in Biga Church, visiting annually. We have a home Bible study group meeting fortnightly. There is a small team of flower arrangers.

Associated Groups

The local preschool group (Flip Flops) accredited with OFSTED meets in the Thomas Longley Hall most weekdays' day during term time. It is very heartening during the week to hear the sound of children having fun around our church grounds. The vicar has opportunities during the year to speak to the children at special times such as Easter, all Saints, (what Halloween is really about) and Christmas. The Church has from time to time provided financial support to the group.

There is a local dance school holding classes in the hall three evenings a week.



Services

During the interregnum Sunday Services are currently held fortnightly at 10.30 am with Parish Communion (Common Worship Order 1). When the post is filled it is intended to re-start weekly services and to do more in the way of 'family' services and outreach.

Our churchmanship could be described as 'open and broad church.' We endeavor to be inclusive and aware of regular visitors, some of whom come year after year when they are on holiday. We are a community church as there are no other churches in the village.

Occasional Offices

Baptisms are held during the Family Service when requested. There are also occasional weddings. Funeral services are often requested by families who do not have any contact with us.

Confirmation services have been held regularly. In 2018 one parishioner was confirmed.

We also hold the following special services:

- Ash Wednesday
- Full Liturgy for Holy Week including
 - Dramatised reading of the Passion
 - Maundy Thursday Eucharist
 - The Stations of the Cross
 - Easter Day celebration
- Ascension Day service
- Carol Service

Parish Administration

There are two Churchwardens and the PCC meets as required. The PCC includes a representative from the preschool.

As part of the Rye Team Ministry there is also support from the Team Administrator, based in Rye.

Finance

The Church is most fortunate to be endowed by a trust fund which provides for the upkeep of the church fabric. Along with fund raising, we more or less meet our financial commitments backed up by St Mary's Church in Rye. Our committed congregation consists mainly of older folk on a pension, so this limits our income.

The Trust Fund is administered by a group of Four Trustees from the Church (the Churchwardens, two members of the PCC) and our Treasurer who is a partner in a local accounting practice.

Both the Church and the Trust Fund produce annual accounts.

Church of St Mary's, East Guldeford

The Community

Across the road at Salts Farm Shop a group of retired locals meet for coffee on Wednesday mornings at 11am. Apart from the church, this is the only communal space and has proved valuable for company and communication, since the busy A259 is loaded with fast traffic and there are no footpaths, making walking and cycling hazardous. Also in the farmyard are a café/eatery and a garden centre, plus offices and small businesses and the office of the Walland Marsh Internal Drainage Board, where local farmers meet regularly. Fundraising is nearly completed to purchase a defibrillator to be situated at the Farm Shop. A Book Club and a Needlecraft group are held at each end of the month on a Thursday. The yard also hosts Boules contests in the summer.

There is an hourly return bus service from Lydd Camp via Camber and East Guldeford to Rye Station.

The Church Community

The population of East Guldeford is approximately sixty persons, of whom seven are over 75, a few under 25, and the rest mostly 40-75. Formerly the inhabitants were all from sheep farming families (Romney breed) but now several couples from elsewhere have moved in to take their places, bringing different lifestyles and fresh ideas. There is no racial, and very little religious, diversity.

Services

A Service of Holy Communion is held at 9.15am on the first Sunday of the month from April to October, to fit in with the later service at Camber. Following the Christmas Carol Service, the church is closed during January, February and March due to soggy ground/weather conditions.

In 2012 St. Mary's was designated a Chapel of Ease and was incorporated with St. Thomas's, Camber, but it still holds licenses for baptisms, weddings and funerals. The liturgy is plainly set out in a booklet, like that of St. Thomas's, and the hymns are usually sung "a capella" with tuning from a battery loaded keyboard. Services follow an annual pattern:

April: Easter, shared at Camber

August 6th: The Transfiguration of our Lord Deanery Service.

October: Harvest Festival

November: Remembrance

December: Christingle and Carol Services

The congregation at present comprises of 8-11 worshippers, plus three moderately quiet terriers.

Other Church Activities

An annual summer garden party and barbeque is held in the churchyard and is well supported by parishioners. We have also had concerts in the church – the acoustics are excellent.

Future Plans

Plans have included opening-up the church, which is a welcoming space, for more village gatherings, concerts, flower festivals, walking parties etc., but at present the extra energy and man/woman power is lacking and the farmers are stretched. However, we do receive a great number of passing visitors, and some bus tours, who include St. Mary's on their Marsh Churches route.

Very recently an excellent guidebook has been written by a parishioner and is available with cards for visitors. Another leaflet on local Marsh walks is also planned.



The Buildings

St. Mary's is a statuesque early 16th century church which sits, barn-like amidst sheep pasture. There is a hundred yard walk through the field to the church from the busy A259 to Ashford and the Channel ports, but no special provision for cars. Parking in the same field is allowed by kind permission of the landowner. The church has no electricity or water supply and no facilities or other buildings. The heating is well served by four gas heaters. At Christmas it is lit to great effect with candles.

The older part of the churchyard is kept grazed by sheep.

The Church is the only 'Marsh' Church located in East Sussex. St. Mary's has been fortunate in attracting grants from the Romney Marsh Historic Churches Trust and the Sussex Historic Churches Trust. Following repair of the rainwater goods, and large scale renovation of exterior walls and replacement of special-Tudor sized bricks during the past two years there were no major works contemplated for a long time until the rendering to the south wall suffered in the 2013/14 rains. The work was completed in summer 2014 and funded by RMHC

What we do well and the challenges faced

- We are a friendly and welcoming Church
- We have been strong in pastoral care
- We are active in the community
- We would like to be more attractive to the youth of the community through the Church, and new initiatives.

What we can offer to our Priest

- United support from both churches for the new incumbent
- Faithful attendance at services and in prayer
- Two Churches which are financially stable
- Support of the ministry through the Rye Team
- Interesting challenges in terms of outreach to our communities

What are we hoping for in our Priest

- We are looking for a priest who will continue to deepen and enrich our worship and spiritual life within our Church community.
- Who is a good communicator, both in the pulpit and beyond, with a heart for pastoral care, and a sense of mission to people of all ages in our communities whether regular worshippers or not.
- Who has a deep regard for the sacraments and a sense of occasion when taking services.
- Who will appreciate and enjoy being a member of the Rye Team.