

Benefice Profile

St Thomas the Martyr, Winchelsea
All Saints & St Nicolas, Icklesham
St Mary & St Peter, Pett
St Nicholas, Pett Level



Introduction from the Bishop of Chichester

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

Welcome to our Benefice!

Thank you for considering our Benefice as a place where God may be calling you to service in the next stage of your ministry.

We hope that in the pages of this profile you will discover what underpins the life of our churches and communities and how God provides so generously in all we do. It is impossible to cover all aspects of our churches and communities in the space available, so please do not hesitate to ask if you require further information.

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About the Parishes

Winchelsea

Winchelsea is a small rural, coastal town, with a rich history and monastic heritage. Lying on the 'Old Way' pilgrimage route in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, our medieval church stands in the heart of a close-knit community. We also incorporate Winchelsea Beach, a small community hugging the coastline, which is much expanded by holiday makers including families and young people staying at the caravan parks in the summer months. It is a most attractive area, featuring a fascinating coastline. It is predominantly rural in nature, with Rye to the east and Hastings to the west.

Town website - www.winchelsea.com

Winchelsea Parish Magazine - www.winchelsea.com/winchelsea-parish-magazine

Icklesham

The village of Icklesham has a population of 1500 and lies approximately two miles west of Winchelsea on the A259. The church is a Grade 1 listed building of significant historical interest and is the oldest church in the benefice. Together with Winchelsea, it is listed as one of the best churches in East Sussex. The village has a thriving Church of England School, and this has been well supported by the previous vicar. There are also two thriving CAMRA pubs and a great sense of community.

www.icklesham-pc.gov.uk

Pett & Pett Level

Pett & Pett Level is a coastal parish, five miles north-east of Hastings and Icklesham and Winchelsea, with the ancient town of Rye 8 miles to the east. Pett & Pett Level is located in an Area of Outstanding Beauty and is a popular destination for walkers and holiday makers. The village of Pett is situated on a road which runs east to west along a ridge and leads to the parish's second settlement at Pett Level. The church of St Mary and St Peter lies near the highest point of the ridge and the little Chapel of Ease, St Nicholas, is located on the beach at Pett Level.

Pett & Pett Level Community Website - www.pettnet.org.uk

Pett & Pett Level News - <https://www.pettnet.org.uk/pett-pett-level-news->



Our Church Buildings

St Thomas the Martyr, Winchelsea

The church is a Grade 1 listed building of national importance. It was founded in 1288 by King Edward I and was originally designed to near cathedral proportions, in the English Gothic decorated style. It can accommodate a congregation of nearly 200. The building sits in the centre of a large walled churchyard which acts as a village green, and the church is used by the whole town for meetings, concerts and other events.



All Saints & St Nicolas, Icklesham

The church is Grade 1 listed and the oldest church in the benefice and needs constant tender loving care. However, it is a fine building and of significant historical interest and with Winchelsea is listed as one of the best churches in East Sussex. It can seat 150.

St Mary & St Peter, Pett

There has been a church in Pett since 1291 and the current church was built in 1864 to

replace a smaller brick, stone and wooden building. The spire of our church stands as a landmark of the visible Christian church for miles around, rising 250 feet above sea level. Efforts are made to keep the church compliant with the Quinquennial requirements. Work currently being carried out includes the removal of old flaking plasterwork and the installation of a new lighting system. The church has excellent acoustics and has, in the past, been used for concerts. It is our hope that we can resurrect a regular programme of events when the building works are completed.



St Nicholas, Pett Level

St Nicholas is a Chapel-of-Ease, formerly a Lifeboat Rocket Launch station, which was built in 1878 by the Admiralty. In 1935 it was purchased by the Diocese and dedicated to St Nicholas by the Bishop of Lewis in April 1935, and in October of that year it was authorised for public worship by the Bishop of Chichester. The chapel can hold 25 people.



Where we are now

Winchelsea

At Winchelsea, the style of worship is mainly traditional with sung liturgy, use of incense and altar bell. Whilst we appreciate and honour the traditional our strength is also inclusivity, and we seek to be open to everyone. People in civil partnerships and same-sex marriages play a significant part in the life of the town and in the life and ministry of the church. We use liturgy from Common Worship 2000 (Eucharistic Prayer B), and we have a popular monthly service from the Book of Common Prayer.

We have a full complement of services during Holy Week, at Easter and at Christmas. St. Thomas also has a thriving benefice-wide bible study group that meets in The New Inn in Winchelsea every month, where we attempt to relate to scripture in a contemplative and intelligent way. We hope that a new priest will continue to facilitate and guide our discussions, as we try to clarify the multilayered meanings and history with wisdom and open heartedness.

Icklesham

At present two services are held monthly with a Eucharist service on the second Sunday of the month at 9:30am, and occasionally a joint benefice service on the 5th Sunday. Attendance on average is around 20, on a good day 30 with 6 children present. The school hold services at Christmas, Easter, Harvest and a leavers service in July.

Pett & Pett Level

We currently have one service each month in the parish church of St. Mary and St. Peter church in the village of Pett, and one service a month at the little St Nicholas chapel of Ease in Pett Level. The services are Holy Communion and the service at St Nicholas is a BCP service. Both St Mary & St Peter and St Nicholas are open every day as are all our churches in the Benefice. St Nicholas, being on the beach at Pett Level receives many hundreds of visitors each year, particularly in the summer months, and we know from comments in the visitors book how valued our little church is to all who visit.

Attendance at both churches varies, but on average 12 people attend a monthly service at St Mary & St Peter church in Pett and 12-18 attend the monthly 8.30am BCP service at St Nicholas. Attendance increases when we have Christmas, Easter, Sea Sunday and Remembrance Day services.



Regular activities

Bible Study at The New Inn, Winchelsea
- held on the first Thursday of every month

Monthly Fellowship lunch held at Winchelsea Beach

Mid-weekly evening prayer group

Mothers Prayers held every month in various homes in Winchelsea Beach

Bi-monthly Quiz Night to raise funds for Pett Church held in The Royal Oak pub in Pett

Open the Book sessions held at St Thomas Primary School

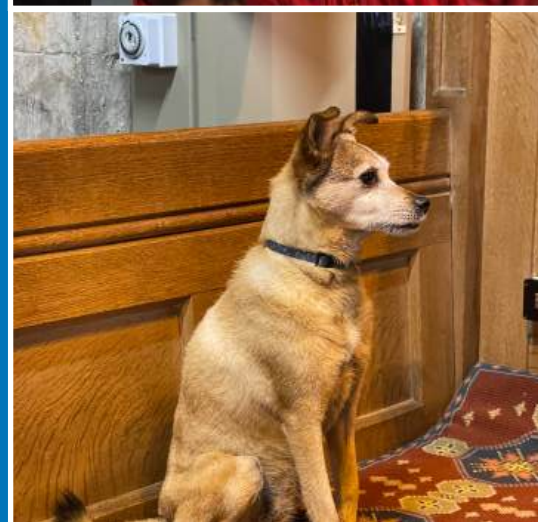
Winchelsea Church Market - monthly

Regular Churchyard Guardian work parties at Pett

Regular Winchelsea Arts Concerts held in St Thomas, Winchelsea

Lent Lunches in all 3 parishes

A very popular Pet Service was held at St Thomas church in Winchelsea and we hope this will be a yearly event.





Our Current Worship

WINCHELSEA

EVERY SUNDAY
11.00am Parish Eucharist Service
Average attendance **60**

ICKLESHAM

SECOND & FOURTH SUNDAYS 9.30AM
PARISH EUCHARIST
Average attendance **20**

PETT

THIRD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH
9.30AM PARISH EUCHARIST
Average attendance **12**

PETT LEVEL

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH
8.30AM BCP
Average attendance **15**

Who we're looking for?

We're looking for a vicar who will..

Be sensitive to the wide range of spiritual traditions represented in our congregations.

Have a clear understanding of, and a willingness to cater for the needs of a diverse benefice. We would expect our incumbent to be fully affirming of the ministry of female priests and bishops. The PCC voted in 2024 to approve the use of 'Prayers of Love & Faith', and we would expect our incumbent to be supportive of equal marriage.

Have a demonstrable presence combined with the proven ability to lead and work in co-operation with others.

Be someone who is willing and able to manage three parishes and delegate responsibility where needed. The incumbent will be supported by Churchwardens, Treasurers and PCC Secretaries

Listen, be understanding, approachable, and responsive to the needs of our churches and the communities

Relate easily to children, young people and families

Be a team person, willing to share and develop ideas with others and delegate where appropriate

Be open to developments and new directions enabling us to be courageous

Be bold and imaginative in developing liturgy as a channel for multigenerational worship

Have a caring and outgoing personality, with a commitment to the pastoral role combined with the strength of character and experience to take tough decisions.

Help develop the relationship between our churches and our schools.

Our Teams

Winchelsea PCC - 2 Churchwardens, 2 Synod Reps, 8 elected Members



CELIA KING
Churchwarden



JOHN RODLEY
Churchwarden



DAVID HARRIS
Treasurer



MARION
LOVELL
Music Director



MARY PARKER
PCC Secretary

Icklesham PCC - 8 elected Members, including Deanery Synod Rep



MARK TAYLOR
Churchwarden



BENJAMIN SASSE-WALLER
Treasurer and Acting PCC
Secretary



MARION LOVELL
Deanery Synod Rep

Pett & Pett Level PCC - 4 elected Members, plus an ex-officio Treasurer



JOHN CASE
Churchwarden



HEATHER GODWIN
Treasurer



ANDREW
BLACKMAN
PCC Member



ANGELA HAWKSLEY
PCC Secretary
Lay Chair - Deanery
Synod



BECKY
PCC Member

Finance & Fabric

Winchelsea

St. Thomas has met its Parish Contribution over the last few years. The PCC makes every effort to enhance income and reduce expenditure without losing sight of the actual purpose of the church. We are fortunate that the Friends of Winchelsea Church manage a significant bequest aimed at preserving the fabric of the church and churchyard. The Rector is ex-officio President of the Friends.

The church runs many fund-raising events, including the popular and successful church markets. St. Thomas is also a well-used venue for local cultural events such as the Winchelsea Arts concerts and Rye Arts Festival events, and this helps to raise additional funds. As with many churches, significant increases in our day-to-day overheads are stretching our finances. The Annual Report and accounts are available on request.

St. Thomas has been successful in obtaining a number of grants for repairs to the roof, and window tracery and to the ruined transepts. We act on recommendations from the Quinquennial Reports to maintain the building and its contents in the best possible condition. Recent repairs to the organ have been costly but we were fortunate in getting help from the Friends for this.

The churchyard is well maintained, and the grass is cut regularly by a contractor, and we have periodic working parties to tidy up around the graves, the outer wall and the Garden of Remembrance. This involves many people from the local community who are not necessarily church members but can be persuaded and fortified by beer and sandwiches! We have created wildflower circles to produce a habitat for wildlife and encourage biodiversity. We are fortunate in having a group of swifts who nest in the cracks in the church walls and return every year during the spring and summer months. In 2024 this delightful event even made its way onto the BBC TV Southeast News when a news team came to record and interview the Rector.



Icklesham



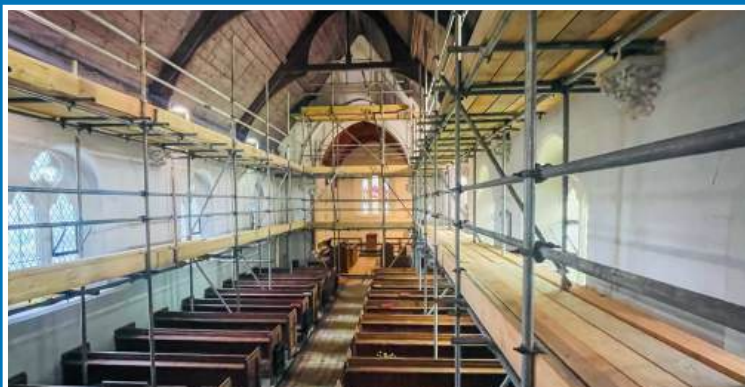
All Saints with St Nicolas has seen a decline in church attendance over the years and thus income and financially is just 'keeping its head above the water'. It contributes what it can regarding the Parish Share, and last year increased the amount slightly due to our successful fund-raising efforts. A long outstanding Quinquennial advisory on the North roof was addressed with a complete retile. This was possible due to bequests, fundraising, a short-term non-interest loan and grant funding.

The churchyard is well maintained with the help of a grant from the Parish Council. Recent clear-up days in the churchyard and boundaries by volunteers from the village, not all church goers, has resulted in the church being more visible, enticing walkers off the 1066 path to visit the church. This is evident from the comments in the visitor's book and the increase in donations.

Icklesham church manages the publication of the monthly Parish Magazine which is distributed to 200+ subscribers in the village and this brings in a small income. We have spent much time and energy on trying to take the church to the village - Lent Lunches have been held in the church with donations going to local charities and the church has a presence at the annual village fete. A Remembrance Service is led by the church at the village Memorial Hall, and this is well attended. Very recently, an Art Exhibition was held over a weekend, plus a Murder Mystery in the Manor Chapel. The latter has resulted in a small revival and increased attendance on a Sunday morning. A big handicap the church has, is that there are no toilet facilities. Investigative work is taking place as to how best a toilet could be installed, and fundraising efforts are taking place towards this aim.

Pett

Pett has so far managed to pay its parish share, but our financial resources are very limited and regular monthly giving is a small percentage of the £750 we pay to the Diocese, but somehow, year on year, either through bequests and fund-raising events we manage to pay our way. St Mary & St Peter church is currently having major work done on the interior, which will cost the PCC in the region of 60K when the work is completed. We are using our reserves to pay for this, but we have also been successful in raising money from within the Pett & Pett Level community and by applying for grants.



The Rectory

Situated opposite the beautiful church of St Thomas in Winchelsea, with wonderful views from the rear of the house to the sea, Rye & Rye Harbour, Romney Marsh and Dungeness.

- 4 Bedrooms
- First Floor Sitting Room
- Dining Room with Sliding Door to Garden
- Large Kitchen and Utility Room
- Two Bathrooms on first floor
- Study
- Separate Lobby
- Garage
- Shed, Greenhouse
- Large well kept garden



Road & Rail Links

All four churches are located within a few miles of each other and are easily accessible by car or bicycle.

Winchelsea to Pett is 5.3 miles

Winchelsea to Icklesham is 2 miles

Winchelsea to Pett Level is 4.2 miles

There is a fast rail service from Winchelsea to London St Pancras, changing at Ashford International that takes just 71 minutes.

Gatwick Airport is easily accessible via the A21 (63miles) or via rail from Hastings.

There is an hourly Stagecoach Bus (100) service from Winchelsea to Rye which takes 9 minutes. The bus from Winchelsea to Hastings takes 30 minutes.



Further Information

Useful Websites

Icklesham Parish Council - www.icklesham-pc.gov.uk

Winchelsea Town Website - www.winchelsea.com

Pett & Pett Level Community - www.pettnet.org.uk

Winchelsea Beach - www.winchelseabeachcommunityassociation.co.uk

Winchelsea Arts - www.winchelsea-arts.org.uk

Church website - winchelsea-icklesham-churches.org.uk

Winchelsea Travel Guide and Map - www.southeastcrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/WInchelsea-Folding-Map-March-2025.pdf

Rye News - www.ryenews.org.uk

Parish Magazines

Winchelsea Parish Magazine - <https://www.winchelsea.com/winchelsea-parish-magazine>

Pett & Pett Level News - <https://www.pettnet.org.uk/pett-pett-level-news-monthly>

Schools & Colleges

St Thomas Primary School - www.st-thomas-winchelsea.e-sussex.sch.uk

Icklesham Primary School and Nursery - www.ickleshamcp.e-sussex.sch.uk

Hastings Academy -

www.thehastingsacademy.org.uk

Rye College - www.ryecollege.co.uk

Church Addresses

St Mary & St Peter, Pett Road, Pett,
Hastings, East Sussex, TN35 4HE

St Thomas the Martyr, Winchelsea, East
Sussex, TN36 4EB

All Saints & St Nicolas, Main Road,
Icklesham, East Sussex, TN36 4BH

St Nicholas, Pett Level Road, Pett Level,
Hastings, East Sussex, TN35 4EH



