

PARISH PROFILE

The Ancient 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 modern 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.

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, in both churches. Past members have returned to the church, and new members have started to attend. Together, the churches have surpassed pre-covid numbers and continue to thrive. 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 throughout Advent and Christmas) The parish continues to work with neighbouring churches, and for the last three years a Good Friday Procession of Witness has taken place, which was shared with the Baptist Church in Pevensey Bay. This year (2025) we are jointly introducing an out-of-doors carol service. We have established a monthly service of Joint Evening Prayer, when we join with some of our neighbouring parishes. The monthly service rotates around four churches on the last Sunday of the month. The parish of Pevensey moved into vacancy in April 2023 and, until Spring 2026, has had support from an NSM Associate Vicar and an Honorary Assistant Priest. There is also an active Licensed Lay Minister. There are several retired clergy in the area who also provide occasional Sunday cover. A small office was created at St Wilfrid's for use by the Associate Vicar and this is available for others to use. There is an ALM currently in training, specialising in 'Rural Mission & Ministry', who will be licensed in September 2026.

THE VICAR WE NEED

We would like our new Vicar to be forward looking, to lead us confidently into the future, building on advances that have been made in recent years. Leadership which is both innovative and collaborative would be gladly welcomed by the PCC, the people and assisting ministers. The PCC and congregation understand that this is a House for Duty appointment and will support proper boundaries and patterns of working for this part-time post.

We see the pastoral care of parishioners as being of primary importance, and the new vicar will have strong support, in particular, of the Licensed Lay Minister. Our aim is to show to our communities the love of God, both in service and in care.

Our new priest would embrace the Sacramental worship of the churches in Pevensey which is held in high esteem by both 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.

ACCOMMODATION

The house we offer our new Priest in Charge is a recently purchased property in Pevensey Bay and is in superb condition. Detached, it has four bedrooms, three reception rooms, two bathrooms and a large mature garden. There is a garage and large driveway providing ample off road parking. The house is close to the beachfront, the local shops, pub, cafés and leisure facilities. The whole area is steeped in history and has some wonderful local walks. The beach is very close-by. There are also good bus and rail services to Eastbourne and the surrounding area and a direct rail link to London. *(n.b. Photos show furniture, which is not included)*



ABOUT THE PARISH

The Parish boundaries

The Parish of Pevensey includes the small, historic village of Pevensey which is located on the edge of the Pevensey Levels, three miles east of Eastbourne with all major facilities, including the District General Hospital. 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, town gaol and 14th century Mint House, with plans to restore it to its former grandeur. The 800-year-old Parish Church of St. Nicolas is very near the castle separated only by the large village car park.



Pevensey 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 Pevensey in 1066, reputed to have been in what was then a naturally occurring coastal harbour, lying behind the castle. The land between Pevensey and Pevensey Bay gradually silted up and now lies approximately ½ a mile south of the village of Pevensey, behind the shingle beach.

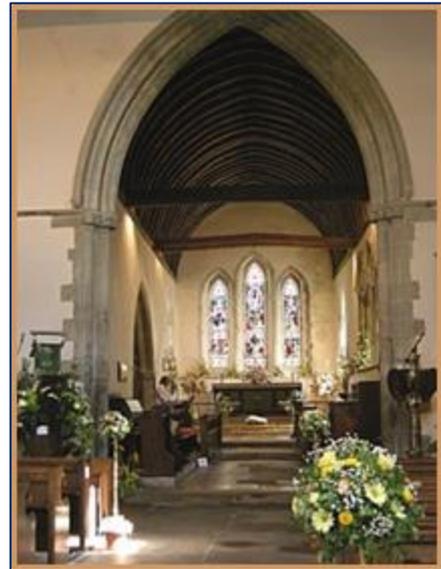
Pevensey Bay has grown in popularity as a seaside resort and as a result a number of caravan parks and holiday homes have been established, so the population increases substantially during the holiday season.

From 1930 housing development began 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. Pevensey Bay has grown in popularity as a seaside resort and as a result an increasing number of static caravan parks and holiday homes have been established, all of which swells the population during the holiday season.



Demography

Pevensey 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 Pevensey 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 itself. The 2021 Census records the population of Pevensey 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 Pevensey 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 Pevensey 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 Patronal Festivals. Although each of our two churches has its distinctive 'flavour', there is some crossover between the congregations who like to attend both. Both churches observe the liturgical year, its seasons and main festivals.

St Nicolas

St Nicolas is a beautiful Grade 1 listed historic building. It has been a place of peace, prayer and pilgrimage since 1216. It is a perfect venue for a traditional style of worship with an outstanding acoustic quality. The old pipe organ was replaced by a state-of-the art digital organ in 2022 and is regularly played by our Organist & Director of Music. The bell tower



houses a chiming clock installed in 1908 by Smiths of Derby. The bells were re-cast in 1893, and in 2025 were taken away for re-tuning and will return early 2026 (The cost is already covered by specific donations). We have a team of bell ringers who ring before the Sunday morning Communion and at weddings and funerals. The congregation of St Nicolas' has, since Easter 2025, used *Common Worship Order 1* for the Sunday Eucharist. There is also has a robed choir and regular use of incense. There is a growing, mainly elderly, but committed regular congregation, some coming from outside the parish, who appreciate

the Anglo-Catholic 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. The annual All-Souls' service is particularly well-attended by relatives of those for whom we have conducted funerals and others. We have also established regular Healing Services which are welcomed. Average attendance during 2024 was 30 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, is a fine example of modern Brutalist design 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.

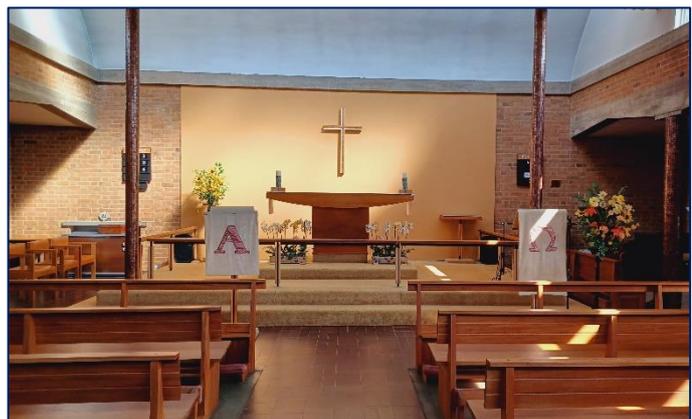


The environment lends itself to a more informal yet still liturgical style of worship. *Common Worship* order one is also used, with seasonal provisions. Music is provided on a modern keyboard and also guitar. Having the hall as part of the building means a flexible, creative space for quiet days, Lent courses and special interest days, such as 'Contemplate & Create' (a led contemplation followed by artistic activities in the hall). We have introduced themed services such as Peace & Justice, and pet services which are popular with folk beyond the usual congregation.

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 congregation consists mainly of active retired local people, and attendance at Holy Communion varies with the holiday season, between 20 and 30. The average for 2024 was 28 (please see addendum).

The large hall is frequently let to local organisations for activities and events and is run by a sub-committee of the PCC 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, Caring & Sharing, Christian Aid, Children's Society and RNLI.

Both churches host baptisms and funerals. Currently, only St Nicolas is licensed for weddings, and it is a very beautiful venue. St Nicolas also hosts

the very popular annual flower festival which attracts visitors from far and wide. Also established in recent years is an annual programme of summer concerts and talks which is of a high calibre and widely appreciated. 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 in 2021 and have proved very popular and give welcome contact with both local and wider community.

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



In the last two years, a series of parish outings have been organised making use of the Pevensey Community Bus. Destinations have been many and varied, including boat trips, bluebell woods and Christmas Tree festivals. The outings are very popular and great opportunities of non-church friends to be invited. For the last three years, the church has also played a part of *Pevensey History Festival* when we undertook a mini prayer pilgrimage around the Pevensey Levels. At the invitation of the *Eastbourne Spring Water Festival*, these pilgrimages have been included on their annual programme too.



Pevensey & Westham C of E Primary School is just inside the neighbouring parish of Westham. The churchwarden is a trustee, and the incumbent would be invited to be a governor there. The most recent OFSTED rating was 'Good' overall with areas of 'Outstanding'

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 - and a weekly newsletter which is distributed as hard copies in the churches, on the website and by email.

ADDENDUM:

Pevensey Parish Church Attendance 2016 – 2025

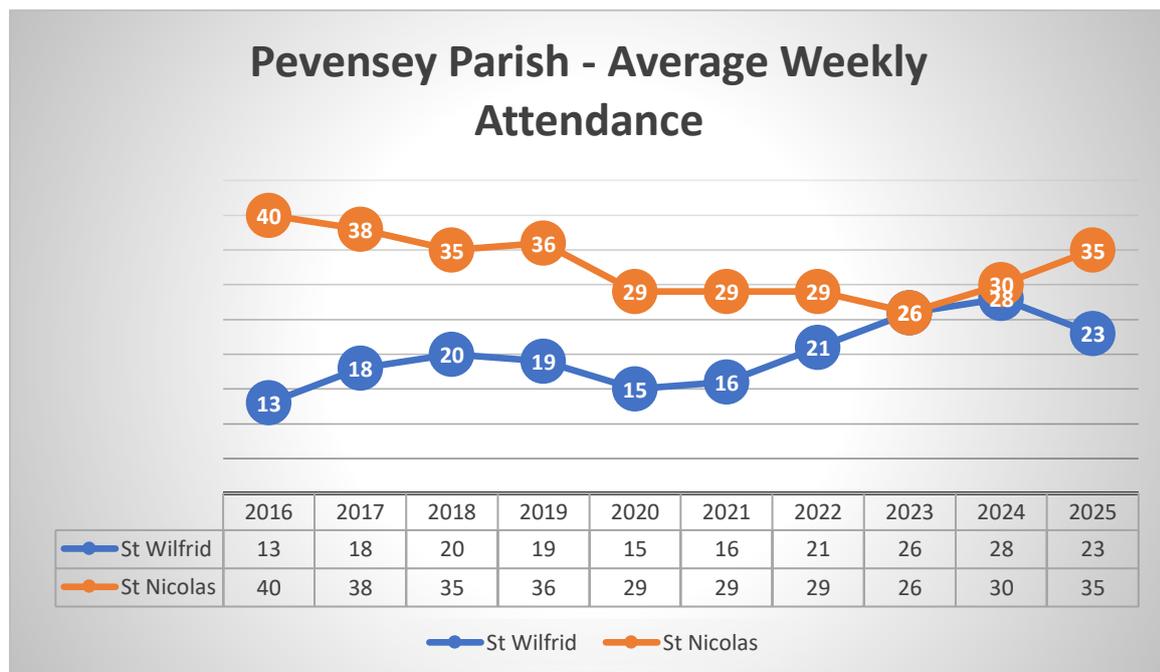
Purpose

Annual PCC review of trends in Sunday attendance at St Nicolas' and St Wilfrid's churches, viewed over a ten-year period.

Method

From the service registers, all-age attendance at the principal Sunday services was recorded and averaged for each year from 2016 to 2025. As the focus was on regular worshippers, major festivals and events (e.g., Remembrance Sunday, baptisms) were excluded.

Results



Observations:

St Nicolas: While Sunday attendance followed the national trend of decline after Covid lockdowns, 2024 brought the first signs of recovery. Average Sunday attendance now stands at 35 on a par with 2018

St Wilfrid: From the time of the parish partnership with St Luke's, there was a gradual increase in Sunday attendance. While there have been recent losses through mortality and movement, attendance still stands above pre-Covid levels

Overall Attendance: Allowing for say five people attending both Sunday services, this puts average Pevensey attendance at 53. 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 significantly above that national average.

