

ST PETER AND ST PAUL

EAST SUTTON



If you walk from Sutton Valence to Ulcombe, you will pass the beautiful and ancient church of St Peter & St Paul, East Sutton.

This small church sits on the Greensand Ridge, perched on the hill overlooking the Weald of Kent.

There was a wooden church on this site in about 1086 AD. It is now a building of Kentish Ragstone, mostly 13th Century which has been extended over time. It features 14th C additions of the North and south chapels, while the tower and porch are 15th C. We have a window with inserts of medieval glass and a large brass of the Filmer family. The church was once the chapel for the Filmer family who resided in East Sutton Park opposite. We have visitors from all over the world wanting to see their family origins. East Sutton Park is now a rehabilitation female prison. Our church cleaners are volunteers from the prison.

We have working gas lights and a new set of lights in the roof funded by one of the congregation. There is a Norman font and a Jacobean pulpit. The church is Grade 1 listed.

The tower has 6 bells in good condition. There is a combined team of bell ringers, visiting campanologists come from all over to ring them.

A closed churchyard surrounds the church, this is being maintained by the generosity of a villager and has recently been planted with hundreds of daffodils. A toilet has recently been installed at the far end of the graveyard, by a substantial donation from a local family.

Across the road is the 'new' graveyard and War Memorial, and the path leading to the memorial has been re planted.

Working parties are organised when necessary to clean gutters and clear fallen trees etc.

The church is part of a small hamlet, although the parish extends some distance south, there are approximately 150 homes and about 400 people. There are several large farms, an assortment of businesses and good commuter links. A popular golf runs alongside the graveyard with another golf course in the south of the parish!

At present, there are 40 on the electoral register, from these there is a small group of attendees.

The local village hall 150 m along the lane was once the school. Events are held there.

The church is popular for marriages, baptisms and funerals, we have a Ladies choir for these events.

Although the congregation is small, at Christmas time we can be nearly at capacity, the church holds about 110 people. There is a band of flower arrangers and a kneeler group, now making pew cushions. The choir sings at special events, not only at East Sutton but combines with the other churches for some services.

The PCC works well together. We have a set of skills between us and support each other. The churchwardens have been brought together by the Interregnum.

Fund raising throughout the year takes the form of coffee mornings and afternoon teas. Carols by Candlelight, Ride and Stride and the Christmas Fayre.

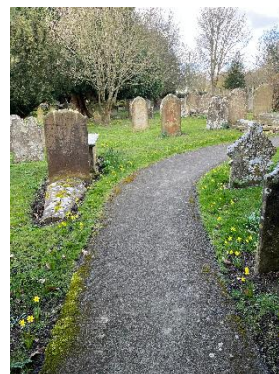
Services are on a monthly rota

2nd Sunday 8am Holy Communion

3rd Sunday 11am Themed Family Service and Holy Communion

4th Sunday 6pm Evensong

5th Sunday 10 am Joint Benefice service (rotating)



Harvest Festival, Remembrance, Carol Service, Christmas Day Family Service and Mothering Sunday

We are fortunate to have 3 people to play the organ and Lay readers and retired clergy, who are serving us well during the Interregnum.

Our church and congregation are small but there is a big heart here, we are friendly and welcoming. It is a hub in a village with little centre and it is supported by people who are generous in their giving.

East Sutton church has its own personality, a feeling that it has been a holy place for so long and people pay homage to its antiquity and beauty.

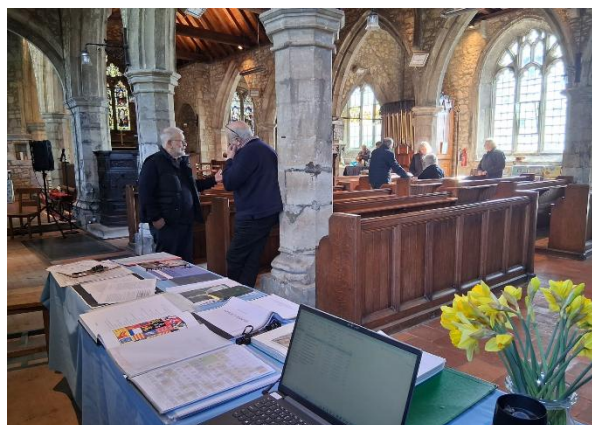
FINANCE

Our annual income is currently about £15k for the general 'Freewill' account, with an additional 34.5k in a designated 'Fabric' fund from covenants, donations and investments.

Approximately 75% of the income is donated either from covenants or church collections, plus associated Gift Aid. The majority of the balance arises from fundraising events and parochial fees, of which the latter may vary each year.

The major item of expenditure is the Parish share 311,600 in 2024. Insurance costs £3.3 pa. we have been running at a small deficit for some years.

General funds, currently run total about £1.5k and there is £37k in the Fabric fund. There are smaller, restricted funds, some dating back centuries, totalling £22k.



ST MICHAELS

CHART SUTTON

St Michael and All Angels Church sits proudly on the Greensand Ridge looking South with magnificent views of the Weald of Kent, the famously named 'Garden of England'



It is adjacent to Chart Place, Sutton Valence Preparatory School and a farm complex exhibiting architectural styles adopted from the lucrative Dutch wool trade era.

A significant part of Chart Sutton parish is given over to farming including apples, cherries, strawberries, cereals as well as livestock . The fruit sector especially attracts many overseas workers who are housed on site

Community activities in the parish are largely centred in the Village Hall which very recently has undergone a major refurbishment bringing it into the 21st Century with external heat pumps, solar panels and EV chargers. Activities include yoga classes, dog training, art classes, dance classes, pilates, short mat bowls, a sewing group, various committee gatherings including Parish Council and Benefice meetings . It also hosts a couple of services each year

There is also a Memorial Playing Field which is regularly used for sports and community activities as well as a children's play area.

The Village Green hosts our carol singing and sale on the green activities which assists in our desire to promote church and village integration

The Church

The site has been used for Christian worship for over a thousand years. The current church building dates from the late 18th Century although the tower survives from earlier years. . The building is generally in good condition with no major items of concern contained in its quinquennial report.

It was rewired a few years ago and the carpets have been replaced. A contract has just been entered into for new heating pads to be installed into the pews at some considerable expense. There is a Church clock which works and strikes. The tower contains six bells which are regularly rung by the active bell ringing team (being a joint team with East Sutton) and also visiting ringers. The musical accompaniment is provided by a modern electric keyboard and portable CD player.

Services

Services are currently limited to two evensongs per month , plus a number of services held by the School during term time . In addition there are some Holy Communion services often linked with special occasions such as Easter and Christmas. In September each year, a 'Battle of Britain' remembrance service is held by the Headcorn Branch RAF Association in commemoration of a pilot who crash landed in the village . There is a memorial ground in one of the orchards nearby where the plane landed .

In addition, two services a year are held in the Village Hall , one a carol service and the other a pancake service prior to Lent , both involving refreshments and both of which attract good attendance from the village.

The Benefice also run a Friday night compline service which is hosted by St Michael's , plus short monthly Bible discussion group.

Finances

The Church finances are solvent with £27,000 on deposit at the Bank. The Parish Share has been paid in full and on time for many years

There are a number of fund raising events in the Parish involving our small Village Green, and various parishioners' gardens where parties are held.

The Future

The PCC is keen to develop further the Church's engagement with the local community which in recent years has diminished somewhat. There are various reasons to believe that the future could be bright at Chart Sutton with its potential developed as follows

- The generosity of the local residents is significant as witnessed by the heating being primarily funded by them
- Sutton Valence School including the Preparatory School located next to the Church value the facilities provided by our Church as evidenced by these words from James Thomas the Headmaster :

' It is such a joy and privilege to be able to use St Michael's Church so often with our pupils from Sutton Valence Preparatory School. It is a beautiful spot steeped in history and our many services there throughout the year are enhanced by their taking place at this spiritual gem . It feels like an integral part of our lives and is hugely appreciated by staff , pupils and parents. '

We would like to further develop this relationship and give the pupils of the junior school at Sutton Valence the opportunity to have the experience of developing their Christian faith in an authentic setting

- The acoustics in the Church are good and suitable for concerts given by choirs and instrumentalists .. Parking is limited at the Church but the School has offered us facilities in their large car park nearby.
- Much of the village focus is on the churchyard and the family graves of local residents . We run monthly maintenance sessions during the summer which encourages local villagers to come and help
- A more pro-active line could be adopted to reach out to some of our less accessible inhabitants eg the fruit pickers who hitherto have largely kept themselves insulated from our community
- Chart Sutton is not situated in a poor or deprived area of our Country and there are pockets of affluence in our community. Many of these residents are not connected to the Church and we would love to try to connect more deeply with these residents and the wider community

