Welcome to
Castle Churches

Part of the North Downs Deanery

in the Diocese of Canterbury

CASTLE CHURCHES

OTHAM · LANGLEY · LEEDS · BROOMFIELD · KINGSWOOD

Our Profile

Discover Ministry with Castle Churches

Two parishes · Five churches · One welcoming benefice in the heart of Kent

A DISTINCTIVE OPPORTUNITY

Castle Churches offers a new Vicar the opportunity to lead enthusiastic, committed congregations who are ready to grow, deepen their shared life and connect more fully with rapidly developing communities.

Why Castle Churches?

- **A varied and rewarding benefice:** minister across two parishes and five worshipping communities, from ancient rural churches to an ecumenical village-hall congregation.
- **A strong missional foundation:** active children's work, schools' engagement, pastoral care, home groups, community events and partnerships across the deanery.
- **Support for ministry:** an Assistant Curate, retired clergy, a licensed Reader, locally authorised ministers, churchwardens, safeguarding officers, pastoral volunteers and a part-time administrator.
- **Welcoming congregations:** diverse worship traditions are held together by a shared commitment to prayer, service, hospitality and growth.
- **Excellent buildings and community links:** five distinctive worshipping settings with established relationships across villages, schools, care homes and local organisations.

A great place to live and learn

The benefice combines attractive villages, countryside and historic churches with convenient access to Maidstone, London, the Kent coast and continental travel. The modern four-bedroom Vicarage is in a quiet cul-de-sac, close to St Nicholas' Otham, with a separate study entrance and all five churches within a short drive.

Good schooling for families

Families benefit from a strong range of local education. Primary schools serving the area include Madginford Primary School, Langley Park Primary Academy (Church of England), Leeds and Broomfield Church of England Primary School, and Kingswood Primary School; the profile records positive Ofsted outcomes and established links between local schools and the churches. Kent also offers a broad secondary-school choice, including grammar, comprehensive, academy, specialist and independent schools.

Who are we seeking?

We are praying for a collaborative, imaginative and pastorally minded priest who will encourage the gifts of others, embrace varied worship styles, strengthen ministry among children and families, develop the use of our buildings, and help us grow as churches rooted in—and serving—their communities.

Could God be calling you to Castle Churches? We would be delighted to begin a conversation.

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Welcome

Castle Churches extend a warm welcome to you as you read this profile and sincerely hope that you are considering applying for the position as our vicar.

We hope that you are the person for whom we have been praying and we look forward to meeting you in person soon. We would like to give you an overview of our parishes before getting down to more detailed information.

Castle Churches comprises two parishes - Otham with Langley and Leeds, Broomfield and Kingswood.

Our churches offer different types of worship, from traditional Eucharist to more contemporary and informal styles including Messy Church. Our varied styles of worship accommodate different preferences.

All of the churches in the benefice offer a warm welcome to adults and children alike. There are children's groups and clubs, regular social events and Pastoral care. We are keen to be an integral part of the wider community with events for young and old alike.

The Castle Churches benefice is situated to the east of Maidstone, Kent at the foot of the North Downs which is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Who are we and who are we looking for?

We are two parishes with five churches; our congregations have enthusiasm and commitment to our faith and mission within our area. We are sure that once our vacancy is filled, we will be able, with leadership and guidance, to grow our church and build on the success already achieved. Our aspiration is to connect with our community and support God's mission at home and in our places of work.

Qualities of our new Vicar

- A person capable of identifying, encouraging and using the gifts, talents and skills of the people in the parish.
- A person who is comfortable with our differing styles of worship and is happy to work in that environment.
- A person who will build on our children's work and encourage growth in this area of mission.
- A person who is flexible in their approach with imagination and enthusiasm to develop what exists and take our mission forward.
- A vision for developing the use of our church buildings to encourage and involve members of the wider community.
- A person who has good administrative and IT skills and will use these to further the delivery of our mission within the parish and beyond.
- A person who will further develop relationships with the rest of the Deanery.

If, after reading our profile, you feel that God is calling you to new ministry in Castle Churches and would like further information, please contact the churchwardens.

Steven Christmas steven.christmas@btinternet.com
Rhian Banham rhianbanham@gmail.com
Christine Oakland churchwardenlbkchurches@gmail.com

Or the Archdeacon of Maidstone The Venerable Estella Last archdeacon.maidstone@diocant.org

There two benefice websites which can be found at at https://www.othamlangley.org/ and https://lbkchurches.co.uk/

Safeguarding

Castle Churches feel strongly that in their churches and in all of their activities everyone should feel safe. We take the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults seriously and have appointed two Parish Safeguarding Officers to help implement the House of Bishops Safeguarding Standards, ensuring our churches are places of safety for everyone.

Vision for The Castle Churches

On 29 September 2024 about a dozen people from the parishes gathered for the morning to pray, discuss and discern what our priorities might be for the next 18 months to two years as we approached a vacancy in the post of vicar. We were led in worship and then shared thoughts about church life and what we might be and do as we move forward, seeking to fulfil the mission of God to draw people back to him. Our priorities, either spiritual or practical, were identified. This image shows the major points and agreed actions:



- Develop a statement of faith and description of our shared belief
- Set up communications groups for a) prayer and b) activities
- Always ask “can we do this together?” before starting any activity
- Explore options for helping people respond to God’s prompting and do some training
- Look for opportunities to join in with existing community activities
- Be intentional about signposting people to the right church for them, across the various churches
- Arrange regular meetings for
    - Social activities
    - Those who take part in services, churchwardens and ministers
    - PCCs and others to continue the development of our joint life together

Parish of Otham with Langley

Our journey so far

Much has already been accomplished in the name of God at both Otham and Langley with a range of activities and initiatives that have drawn a variety of people into our church life enabling them to feel both comfortable and valued. It is important to us that mission remains at the heart of our church life being driven by the united congregations of Otham and Langley through prayer, action and faith. We want to be churches of our communities not just church buildings in the area.

We are enthusiastic and experienced congregations with a range of gifts and talents with lay participation at Sunday services. Monthly Messy Church started in 2014 at Otham, with a break during the Covid lockdowns and regularly has 18 children and their parents. Elev8 is the children's church at Langley. There's a Bible Study home group which meets weekly.



Messy Church, Otham

Additionally, we are part of Bearsted Area Churches Together (BACT) and join for Lent Lunches with a speaker (Anglican/RC/Methodist). We also contribute Easter Eggs to the annual Easter Egg Hunt held around Bearsted Village Green.

Above all it is our hope that we can continue to grow in knowledge, confidence and a desire to become worthy disciples of Christ.

Mission in our community



Otham with Langley Fete

There is lots of opportunity for mission in our local community with new housing developments in both Otham and Langley and building work ongoing. There is a healthy interest in the church within our local community. This is indicated by the popularity of events such as Marmalade Morning; the Christmas Market; Otham and Langley Fete and Remembrance held on Otham Village Green organised jointly with Otham Village Hall; Soup and Snowdrops days; weekly Coffee and Chat; Stretch and Relax; Afternoon Tea held monthly for anyone in the Parish; BACT Easter Egg hunt; Ride



Afternoon Tea at Otham

and Stride; Flower Festivals; Carol Services and the Christmas Eve Crib Services. Concerts and quizzes also attract the wider community.

We have a Pastoral Team available for anybody who lives in the parish. The team offer a listening ear, provide emotional and practical support, visits or referral to other agencies. There are two Care Homes in the parish which are visited regularly with services held at Harvest, Remembrance, Christmas and Easter.

Our contact with Madginford Primary School and Langley Park Primary Academy (CofE) has been very successful, taking the Church to the school and teaching about the love and care Jesus has for everybody. The head teachers have been very welcoming and are very keen for this relationship to be rekindled. Sunrise Day Nursery, adjacent to Langley Church, come to the church for their own Nativity Service and Madginford School brought pupils to Otham Church to undertake the Church Trail, a quest to find items of interest around the church, followed by a brief service. Due to the significant housing development in the area a Church Missioner, Captain Graham Bibby, was assigned to work in the area with our Parish and achieved an excellent working relationship with all of the schools in the area. Sadly, his time with us ended a short while ago but he laid excellent foundations for the future.



Sunrise Day Nursery

There is an emerging realisation that as well as maintaining the faith and life of the church, our future is bound up with those outside our church community and our mission is to engage with them. This message needs to be owned and acted on by all for it is too important to be left to individuals or small groups.

Otham Church: A brief history

St Nicholas' Church, Otham is a beautiful, historic Grade I Listed Building. The Domesday Book records a church in Otham in 1086. More details in Appendix A.



Over the 900 years of the life of the church, there has been continual change both in the structure and the internal ordering. Electricity arrived in the mid-20th century and an extension for a toilet with disabled facilities was built in 2003. The Open Church Project Phase One (heating, flexible seating and step free access into the church) and Phase Two (enclosing the Lady Chapel with glass to enable prayer, meetings or creche, plus a ramp for

disabled access to the altar) were completed in 2009. Phase Three was modified due to financial constraints and the kitchen-in-a-cupboard was installed in 2019.

The church has six bells now (see Appendix A) and a team of bellringers, young and old.

The recent development to the south of the church, Parsonage Place, has created a new community on our doorstep. The developers of Parsonage Place, Bellway Homes, provided Otham Church with a much-needed car park.

Otham is a fairly traditional church that seeks to engage with God through organ led hymns and liturgy. Communion Services are held on three Sundays with Morning Prayer on the fourth Sunday in the month. The congregation is full of people who are journeying together to discover more about God. You can expect a warm welcome, a worshipful service, refreshments afterwards with a chat and an opportunity to make new friends.

We are extremely fortunate to have The Friends of Otham Church (FOC), a charity founded in 2001 to help preserve this special place for the local community, families, young people and future generations. Its objective is to attract people, churchgoers or not, who love this wonderful building, a place of worship for more than 1,000 years.

Completed Projects include:

A new organ and a piano
Contribution to new and refurbished bells
Solar lights to illuminate the path to the church
Contribution to the cost of major repairs
A new path from the car park to the church
Contribution to a new kitchen
Guide to a popular church trail
New churchyard shed for storage
A new church "Welcome" sign

Fundraising Events include:

Concerts & recitals, refreshments provided
Visits to places of interest
Bridge Afternoons.
Garden Safaris.
Afternoon teas
Garden Parties
Talks
Annual trip to a Prom Concert at the Royal Albert Hall

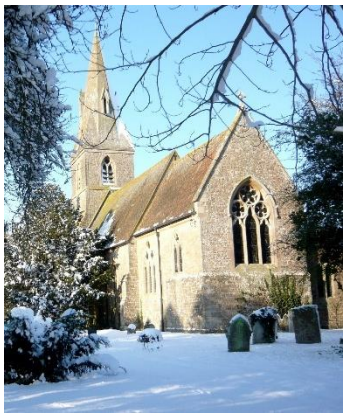


New “Welcome” sign at Otham



FOC Tote Bag sale at the Fete

Langley Church: A brief history



St Mary's Church Langley is a lovely Grade II* Listed Building, an important William Butterfield (architect) design. More details in Appendix B. A toilet was built in the church during the 1990s and a new kitchen installed in the choir vestry in 2018. The clock on the tower is a WWI War Memorial and Langley Parish Council recently paid for its renovation.

St Mary's has achieved a Bronze award from the Eco Church organisation, part of A Rocha. The Eco Church award scheme aims to celebrate the ways that church communities have been engaging with caring for the earth as a key part of our Christian faith.

Our congregation is very friendly, and the services aim to engage with all ages. St Mary's worship style is relaxed and informal, the services are all Morning Celebration, sometimes including Holy Communion, because we are thankful and celebrate the Good News of Jesus Christ.



Full immersion Baptism at Langley

Our first full immersion Baptism took place in the church in 2021. (Photo left)

A VE Day concert and celebration of peace in Europe took place in the church and we shared a meal in the churchyard. (Photo below)





Celebrating VE Day at Langley



Snowdrops in Langley Churchyard

Soup and Snowdrops events at Langley attract Galanthophiles[1] from far and wide. It is a truly amazing sight, showing the incredible beauty of God's creation. (Photo left)

Our newly formed Friends of Langley Church will be a great asset, with fundraising planned for the future to help maintain our beautiful, historic church.

[1] The Botanical name for snowdrops is Galanthus, and Galanthophiles the name of their devoted admirers

Parish of Leeds, Broomfield and Kingswood (LBK)

Our journey so far

The parish covers the villages of Leeds and Broomfield and the more recent development at Kingswood. There are two parish churches, St Nicholas' at Leeds and St Margaret's at Broomfield and a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) at Kingswood which meets in the Village Hall. The LEP is supported by the Church of England, Methodist and Baptist churches. Together we are known as the LBK churches. The Parish has a good relationship with Leeds Castle with gifts of Christmas Trees for both churches.

Kingswood church is administered by a separate inter-denominational Church Committee which meets every month.

In St Nicholas' Church Leeds and St Margaret's Church Broomfield we are working hard to make the regular services more engaging for people of all ages. We look forward to working with our new incumbent to expand this work.

There are typically five to eight weddings in the parish each year, the allocation between Leeds and Broomfield churches varies. Leeds has a greater capacity, Broomfield sits in a picturesque location.

The Friends of Leeds and Broomfield Churches is a community charity which raise funds to support both churches with significant contributions given recently. Previous events have included Winter Fairs, Curry and Soul evenings and beer festivals.

Ride and Stride, organised by The Friends of Kent Churches, is embraced by all three congregations. It takes place every September and brings funds shared between the charity and LBK churches.

Mission in our community

Leeds Church

St Nicholas' Church, a Grade I Listed Building containing Grade II Listed Memorials, is situated in Leeds Village, Kent. It is an incredible building steeped in history. More details in Appendix C. It has a large nave with wood block flooring and chairs, creating a flexible space inside the church which we want to utilise to help build community and to offer our worship. £26,000 has just been spent putting the roof of the nave and aisles in good order. We have a regular pianist for our services and the building has excellent acoustics.



St Nicholas' Church, Leeds

There is a new retirement village, Ledian Gardens, in the village and some residents come to our services. Our previous vicar visited monthly which proved popular, we want to develop this relationship and work with our new vicar to achieve this.

The church has a great relationship with Leeds and Broomfield Primary, a small voluntarily controlled Church of England School rated as "good" by Ofsted. The school, immediately across the road from the church, has services in the church at Christmas, Easter and Harvest and regular assemblies on Wednesdays and Fridays attended by parents and carers.

At Christmas we join residents carol singing through Leeds village, collecting gifts for the food bank on our way. We end up at the church, with the beacon lit, still singing. We move into the church and are joined by Father Christmas who brings gifts for the children.

The church has 10 bells (see Appendix C) and a bell ringing team. There is a small, well-equipped kitchen and a toilet with disabled facilities. The Parish Council supports the publication of the Church and Village News, produced monthly and distributed to all residents. The churchyard at Leeds is large (4.5 acres) and remains open for burials.

Broomfield Church

St Margaret's Church is a stunning Grade II* Listed Building, situated in a beautiful rural setting. More details regarding in Appendix D. Stonework repairs costing £72,000 have taken place recently and the Quinquennial Report was good. The church has a small but lovely community which meet once a month at 3.30pm. Services are informal, aiming to engage with all ages and children are always very welcome. There is a small chamber organ and an organist is hired as needed although recorded music can be used. St Margaret's is a popular choice for weddings and for baptisms due its idyllic location. The church bells have recently been increased from three to six and ringers come from the Leeds team. Broomfield has a small churchyard which remains open for burials. It is lovingly tended by the Verger who opens the building for services and events and deals with the cleaning assisted by three volunteers. The church has no water supply or toilet facilities meaning it is difficult to hold social events. So, Broomfield joins Leeds and Kingswood for such gatherings.



St Margarets Church Broomfield

There is the annual well dressing at St Margaret's Well (a nationally registered event), outside the church, strongly supported by the children from the church. Our Carol Service is very well-attended and



St Margaret's Well

both events are followed by refreshments, strawberry scones or mince pies according to the season.

Kingswood Church

Kingswood Church meets in the village hall every Sunday morning. It provides a rota of services each month, Baptist, Methodist and Church of England, with the CofE service being a family Holy Communion on the 4th Sunday of the month. There is a children's group (see below) but like our other churches the adult congregation is mainly elderly. Financially it is self-supporting and makes a contribution to each of its sponsor church organisations including Leeds and Broomfield PCC.



Our Church in Kingswood Hall

The Secretary of the Kingswood Committee sits on the Leeds and Broomfield PCC and was licenced as a Reader in 2020. He acts as the Focal Minister and is training for ordination on the Dover Pathway.

Weddings and funerals for Kingswood residents are held at Broomfield Church, which is the parish church for Kingswood. Baptisms for Kingswood residents can be held in Kingswood Hall or in Broomfield Church.

There are a number of social and church activities held in the village hall and in homes including Tuesday Lunch Club for older people, Friday morning Ladies Group, Home Group who are currently viewing episodes of the Chosen.



Craft work at Kingswood Hall

Additionally, there are groups for children and young people, Climbers (ages 3 - 9) meet on Sunday during term time. They take part in the Cafe Service on the 1st Sunday and attend the beginning and end of every other service. On Friday, Kingswood School Crusaders years 3-6 meet after school and Friday evening CANS (Church Activity Nights) youth club takes place for years 6+ in the village hall.

More details in Appendix E.



Kingswood Village Hall

Partnership in mission with Deanery and Diocese

Whilst recognising that mission occurs largely at the local level, the diocese provides support, guidance and statistics and information that enables and encourages planning for mission across the deanery, aligned with the diocesan strategic imperatives. Known as the "Three Bold Outcomes" these focus on revitalising parishes, growing the participation our young people, and creating new worshipping communities.



The Deanery Synod, supported by the Area Dean and Lay Chair, facilitate discussions which explore options for resourcing mission and collaborative working where appropriate.

Missional Learning Communities bring together deanery officers to share challenges and support across the diocese. The North Downs Deanery partners with Maidstone and Ashford deaneries for this process.

Life in Castle Churches

Electoral Roll 2025

Otham with Langley 63
Leeds, Broomfield and Kingswood 20

Pattern of Worship/Services

Otham with Langley

Otham	9.30am Service every Sunday. Holy Communion on 1st, 2nd and 4th Sunday, Morning Worship on 3rd Sunday 3.30pm Messy Church, 1st Monday of the month
Langley	11.00am 1st, 2nd, 3rd Sundays. Morning Celebration on 1st, 2nd Sunday, Morning Celebration with Holy Communion on 3rd Sunday,
with Leeds	10am Cafe Service 4th Sunday 5th Sunday Joint Service

Leeds, Broomfield and Kingswood

Leeds	1st Sunday	9.30am	Morning Worship
Broomfield	2nd Sunday	3.30pm	Celebration
Leeds	3rd Sunday	9.30am	Holy Communion
Leeds with Langley	4th Sunday	10am	Cafe Service (being trialled from August 2025)
Kingswood (CofE)	4th Sunday	11am	All Age with Holy Communion
	5th Sunday		Joint Service

Note: Apart from the 4th Sunday, Kingswood has lay-led Anglican, Methodist or Baptist services on other Sundays.

Occasional Services across the churches: Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday Meditation, All Souls, Remembrance Day Services, Christingles, Carol Services, Crib Services, Midnight Communion, Christmas Day Services.

Statistics

	Churches	Schools	Population	Ages			
				0-4	5-19	20-69	70+
LBK churches	3	2	2642	5%	15%	61%	19%
Otham with Langley	2	2	8260	7%	18%	61%	14%

Parish	Electoral Roll	Usual Sunday Attendance		Baptisms	Weddings	Funerals
		Adults	Children			
LBK churches	20	20	7	4	5	16
Otham with Langley	63	52	5	6	8	8

Finances

Otham with Langley

Otham and Langley's finances were hit by the interregnum with our regular giving dropping significantly and for a while we were unable to afford our full Parish Share though some of our other regular givers have responded positively to help fill the shortfall. We are also forging closer ties with LBK Churches who were generous in paying £22,500 to help offset our deficit for 2025.

Leeds Broomfield and Kingswood

The regular income of the parish covers all the routine running costs of the parish, and the parish share is always met in full. Leeds and Broomfield benefit from the Lady Baillie legacy (previous owner of Leeds Castle) for upkeep and repair of the two ancient churches. However, fund raising is still required to cover building repairs. Friends of Leeds & Broomfield Churches (independent from the churches) contribute to this effort in the form of grants. The Parish also pays the salary of the part-time Administrator for The Castle Group.

2025	Income				Expenditure
	Regular giving, fees and fundraising	Legacies	Investments/ reserves	Total	
LBK churches	26,210		5,526	31,736	53,659
Otham with Langley	68,670		501	69,171	69,665

Staffing in Castle Churches

Assistant Curate: In June 2026 one of our lay ministers was ordained deacon and appointed as Assistant Curate to the Castle Churches Benefice. The Area Dean is currently acting as training incumbent.

Retired Clergy: Two priests with Permission to Officiate gave their unstinting support to the previous incumbent. They have been stalwart in ensuring services have continued during our interregnum and will work closely with our new vicar.

Lay Leadership: We have a licensed Reader who is supported by a small team of five locally authorised ministers. All these people have been a great asset, taking lay led services and preaching.

Parish Administrator for Castle Churches: The administrator is employed part-time (10 to 18 hours a month) and maintains the diary for church bookings as well as providing administrative support to the vicar across the two parishes and five churches.

Churchwardens: There are two wardens for Otham with Langley and there are two vacancies. A number of senior people at Otham take responsibility for various churchwarden roles. LBK churches has one warden.

Pastoral Team: The team leader has completed a Pastoral Lay Ministry Course, and the team has three additional members across Otham and Langley.

Children's Work: Messy Church at Otham and Elev8 at Langley have appointed leaders and a team of helpers.

Safeguarding Officers, Treasurers and PCC Secretary positions are all appointed and active.

The Vicarage

The Vicarage is situated in a quiet cul-de-sac (Kings Acre) within easy walking distance of St Nicholas' Church in the heart of the Downswood. It is a modern (1980's) 4 bed property with lounge, dining room, kitchen and downstairs cloak room. It has double glazing, gas central heating and gardens to the front and rear. An extension was built in 2011 providing a study with a separate entrance, ideal for keeping family life and work apart. In the photo below you can just see the separate study entrance behind the car on the drive.



The Vicarage, Kings Acre

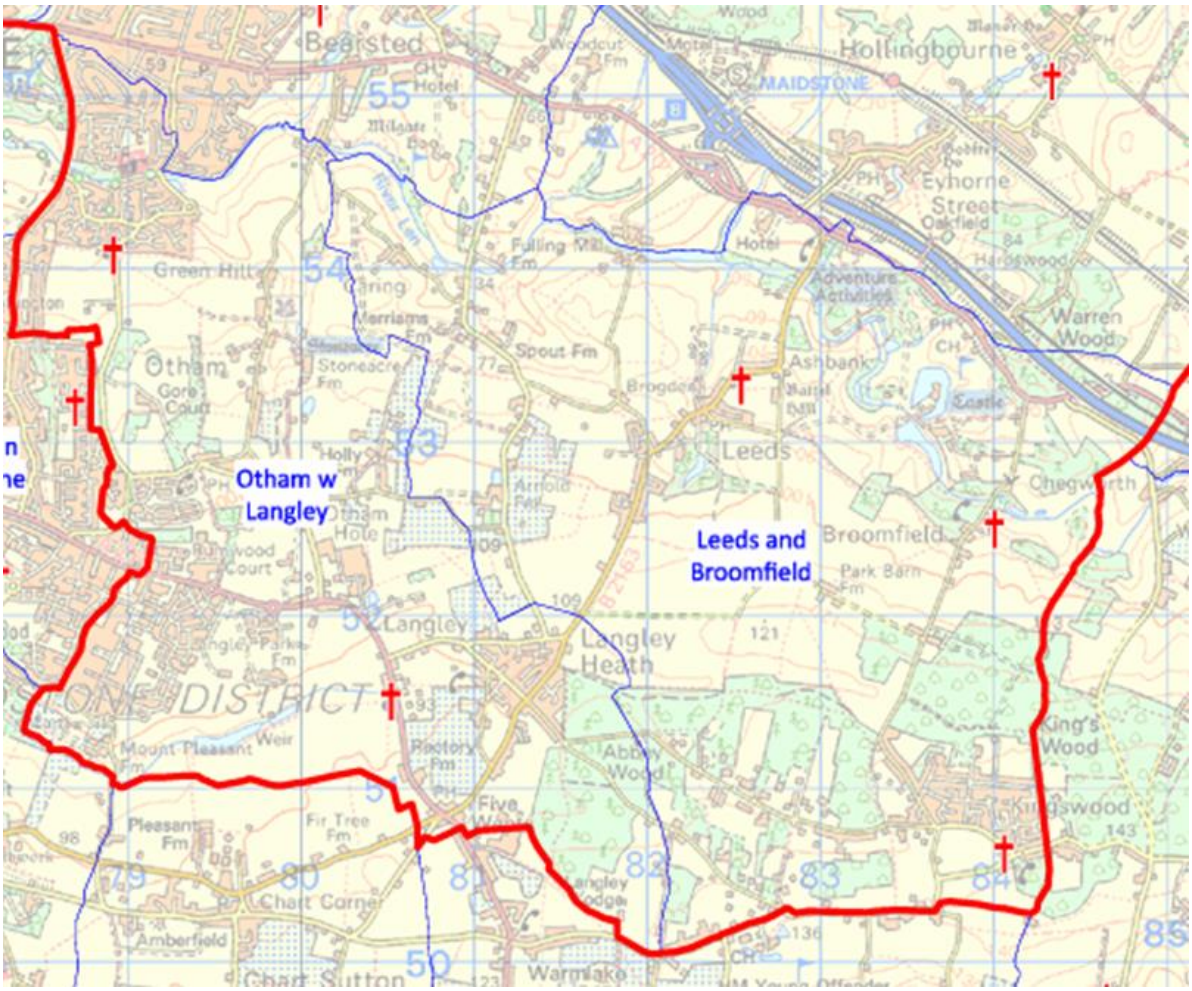
All of the churches are within a short drive from the Vicarage. You may expect the following journey times from Kings Acre:

Church	**Distance**	**Journey time**
St Nicholas' Church, Otham	0.2 miles	1 minute
St Mary's Church, Langley	3.4 miles	10 minutes
St Nicholas' Church, Leeds	4.2 miles	12 minutes
St Margaret's Church, Broomfield	4.9 miles	12 minutes
Kingswood Village Hall, Kingswood	4.6 miles	12 minutes



Aerial view of The Vicarage, Kings Acre

Map of the Parishes of Otham with Langley and Leeds and Broomfield. Kingswood is at the bottom right of the area outlined in red.



This map was compiled for the Diocese of Canterbury by Alistair Sutherland in May 2024 with digital data from Field Dynamics. It contains parish data supplied by the Commissioners of the Church of England, church location data from A Church Near You, and Ordnance Survey data reproduced with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO. ©Crown copyright and database right 2024. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey licences nos 100040148 and 100019918. Please note that some legal parish names may be abbreviated for clarity.



Our parishes are just to the south-east of Maidstone, the County Town of Kent.

The Local Area

Parish of Otham with Langley

There are four village halls in the Parish, one located in Otham Village, which is quite small and larger halls in Downswood, Madginford and Langley. The halls are available for hire. The new developments provided a supermarket, carvery and other amenities.
There has been extensive housing development in the Parish over the last decade or so in the Sutton Road area. This has increased the population of the Parish significantly

Otham

Otham Village is the original habitation that Otham Church served. It is very pretty, with many historic houses including Stoneacre, a Medieval Yeomans House and garden, now part of the National Trust. Otham Village Green has fabulous views of the North Downs AONB. In medieval times the village had thriving stone quarries (no longer active) and extensive agriculture.



Stoneacre, Otham

In the 1980s the residential development of Downswood was built on one of the quarries. There are a number of small shops, pharmacy/takeaway/convenience store. A local Doctors surgery has satellite consultation rooms there. The Orchard wedding venue is also within the Parish.

The Madginford area of Bearsted is part of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Otham with Langley and lies just north of Downswood. Madginford was built in the late 1960s and has a primary school rated as “good” by Ofsted and a fine selection of local shops.

Langley



Oast Houses, Langley

The historic part of Langley village is mainly around the perimeter with 1950s properties in the middle. The church is situated on the west side of the village. To the east is woodland owned by Leeds Castle estate; this area of woods runs from Langley into the village of Kingswood.

There is a good pub and restaurant, The Potting Shed, close to Langley Church.



The Potting Shed, Langley

Parish of Leeds, Broomfield and Kingswood

Leeds

The fabulous Leeds Castle sits close to Leeds Church and is within the Parish. You can find out more about this historic Castle and gardens, its wildlife, maze, playgrounds and Dog Collar Museum at https://leeds-castle.com/her-castle/history-of-the-castle/

The castle was once the major employer and landowner for the village, although much of the estate has now been sold off. The castle and its immediate grounds are a major national tourist attraction and while most residents of Leeds commute to Maidstone or beyond for employment, the influence of the castle is still significant. Relations with the church are good. The grounds of Leeds Castle can be accessed via Public Footpaths. A day ticket allows access to the whole site for a year.



The George Inn, Leeds

Leeds and Broomfield CofE Primary school is opposite the church, as detailed on page 11. The George is a delightful pub in the village serving excellent food. Leeds also has a very successful cricket club, a Women's Institute and a local dramatic society.

Broomfield

Broomfield is a rural village 6 miles south-east of Maidstone, and consists of 29 scattered dwellings, the same number as in the Domesday survey. Apart from St Margaret's Church there are no community facilities, instead the village shares the facilities at Kingswood.



Village Sign

Kingswood



Village Sign

Kingswood is a semi-rural village some 7 miles south-east of Maidstone. It is made up of approximately 600 dwellings, most of which are part of a large housing area established in the 1970s, with about 1,600 residents. There is a primary school, rated as "good" by Ofsted, which is part of the ASPIRE Federation. There is also a general store and post-office, takeaway and physiotherapist plus a well-equipped village hall which, among other activities, caters for a Pre-school group and Kingswood Church. There is a thriving Leeds and Kingswood Scout Group which meets in their own hut in Kingswood and includes Scouts, Cubs, Beavers and Squirrels.

Slightly further afield

There are several large supermarkets nearby. Bearsted and adjacent areas provide all of the main facilities - shops, doctors' surgeries, petrol stations, Post Offices, restaurants, pubs, takeaways and dentists. The main line Bearsted Station connects to London and Dover. Trains to London are regular and take just over an hour.

There are a number of primary schools within the boundary of The Castle Group as detailed earlier. Kent's secondary education system includes a mix of grammar, comprehensive, and academy schools, as well as specialist and independent schools. A significant portion of secondary school places (about 30%) are within grammar schools.

Access to France is easy via the M20 and either through the Channel Tunnel or by ferry. Gatwick (approximately a 50-minute drive) and Heathrow (approximately a 1½ hour drive) are easily accessible.

Kent has two Cathedrals, Canterbury and Rochester and a wealth of historic buildings and castles.



Canterbury Cathedral



Rochester Cathedral

Maidstone United Football Club, Gillingham Football Club and Kent County Cricket Club are all a short distance away. There are many sports clubs and leisure facilities in the area.

Kent County Cricket at Canterbury

