



PARISH PROFILE 2026

We are a single parish of five churches, set in the countryside close to the city of Canterbury. Our warm and faithful congregation is led by one Parochial Church Council and we are financially stable.

Our style of worship covers a diversity of traditions and our community includes a vibrant and very popular Church of England primary school.

We are seeking a new incumbent who will build confidence and inspire us to share God's love in the wider community, and will encourage younger people to follow the Lord.



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VICAR

Bridge Group Parish

A Message from the Bishop of Dover



Welcome and thank you for taking an interest in the role of Vicar of the Bridge Group Parish. The Parish Profile sets out the needs and priorities of the parish, the kind of priest they are looking for - and a little of what the team here hopes the future may look like. Of course, a key part of your discernment process in coming to this role will be gaining a sense of the bigger picture of us as a diocesan family, our vision, and priorities for the future.

Who we are

Founded in 597 by St Augustine, Canterbury Diocese is the oldest diocese in England and has a special place in the life of the national and worldwide Church. With its iconic Cathedral it forms a focal point for the life of the whole Anglican Communion, offering a spiritual home and place of pilgrimage for people from every nation and walk of life.

Kent is renowned as the 'Garden of England' and this rural heart is core to our identity - yet the communities we serve are very diverse. Our Diocese stretches from Maidstone to Thanet, from the Isle of Sheppey to the Romney Marsh. We have 350 miles of coastline with historic ports and seaside resorts, alongside rural communities, market towns and commuter-belt urban developments.

Affluent areas often sit alongside pockets of major deprivation, offering an exciting and challenging mission context.

Our vision

By God's grace we want to be a people who are...

confident & creative disciples of Jesus Christ

rooted in scripture & drenched in prayer

living gratefully, giving generously, caring for creation & sharing the gospel

growing in number & expectations - of God & ourselves

motivated by justice & love, open to the Spirit & ready for adventure!

Therefore we will...

'Therefore we will...' is a recognition that words without actions are empty. In 2023, Diocesan Synod agreed to three bold outcomes which flesh out how our vision will be achieved by 2030.





Three Bold Outcomes

Double the number of children and young disciples.

200 new Christian communities.

Every parish, benefice and deanery showing signs of revitalisation.

Every deanery is currently working on updating their deanery plans from the versions that fed into our 2022 strategy document [which you can find here](#). Our strategic planning across the diocese is a dynamic process - and it's exciting that parishes are considering our vision and the bold outcomes vision for themselves, exploring together what actions they will commit to take, what their local 'Therefore we will...' might look like.

As well as the three bold outcomes our diocesan synod has committed to a net zero carbon action plan. When General Synod and Diocesan Synod adopted this goal, it was clear that it would be very challenging. However, the significant changes in global weather events in recent years have underlined the urgency of tackling the amount of carbon we produce. The leadership shown by the Church of England is important and the action plan takes a positive approach to working towards this ambitious target.

At the heart of all we do is a commitment to transformation for ourselves and our communities: *Changed Lives* → *Changing Lives*. If you are the right person for this role, we will be looking for you to join in with what God is already doing and play a crucial part in making our vision a reality.

Our Safeguarding Ethos

As a diocesan family, we are also deeply committed to our calling to build a safer, more welcoming church for all. We will never be perfect, but we can work together to make our churches safer. At the heart of this ethos is the conviction that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility – and that it needs to be at the heart of everything we do. You can find out more about our approach to safeguarding [here](#).

Our commitment to you

We know that supporting healthy, flourishing ministers (lay and ordained) is crucial for a healthy, flourishing diocese. Therefore, we offer the 'Canterbury Diet' to all our new incumbent ministers – this is an intentional programme for ministerial development, health, growth and faith. A similar lay programme is in development too. We offer pastoral supervision and spiritual accompaniment, an invitation to be part of residential training programmes focused on learning, leading and mission, action learning sets, as well as a range of specialised training events, and other regular opportunities for growth in prayer and spirituality.

In short, I hope that you will be as excited by our vision, priorities and opportunities as we are. Be assured of our prayers as you consider your next step in ministry.

+ Rose

The Rt Revd Rose Hudson Wilkin

Bishop of Dover and Bishop in Canterbury





The Canterbury Diet for Incumbents and Priests in Charge

The *Canterbury Diet* has been designed to support the wellbeing and development of Priests in the Diocese of Canterbury. Each element offers a building block for healthy and effective ministry.

You are encouraged to attend to these three Golden Threads throughout:

Golden Threads
How are prayer and spiritual practices being developed?
How am I learning and reflecting on ministry practice?
How are we attending to good relationships and collaborative ministry?

<p>After licensing the Incumbent meets with the Director of M&M who introduces the priest to the Canterbury Diet and offers a Pastoral Supervisor with whom she/he meets not less than six times per year</p>
<p>Ministers acquire a Spiritual Accompanier and meet regularly, recommended 6-8 weekly</p>
<p>In the first two years the Incumbent or Priest in Charge attends the Ministry Training Programme Monday to Friday residential courses generally held in Ashburnham Week One : The Minister as Learner (soon after licensing) Week Two: The Minister as Leader (six months later) Week Three : The Minister as Missioner (a further six months on)</p>
<p>Participation in the bi-annual Ministerial Development Review Meet with Consultant Reviewer, complete a Personal Development Plan; meet with Archdeacon a few months later and update the PDP, with opportunity to review Pastoral and Spiritual Accompaniment. Meeting with the bishop concludes the MDR</p>
<p>As able, participate in professional ministry courses: Working with Conflict Working with Change Practical Skills Course the first are two by one-day courses, offered regularly at advertised times through the year, the third an annual one-day course Continuing Ministry Development Events E.g. Courses on whole person care, environmental care, preaching the lectionary</p>





And a note from the Archdeacon of Canterbury

If you are reading this you will already be thinking about whether God is calling you to take up the role of Vicar of the Bridge Group. You will see from the parish profile that this is a single parish that has been a single parish since 2020. The last few years have seen a great deal of hard work going into bringing three parish units (and five churches) into one, but now it is time to build on that work and to look to the future and to building up the life of the church in this place.

Like many similar benefices the Bridge Group is experiencing ageing congregations, but there is also a strong link with the primary school. All of the villages are close to Canterbury and there are inevitably people who travel into the City for church as well as for work and school. But this is a good and committed church community who want to grow and want to serve. There is a job to do and we very much hope that there is a skilled and able incumbent out there who can help them do it.

Bishop Rose has outlined what the Diocese of Canterbury has to offer in the way of support, training and equipping for our clergy.

This is a great parish and a good post. I would be pleased to have an informal conversation with anyone who is interested in applying. Please contact Caroline Hemington (01227 473597 or chemington@diocant.org to arrange a time).



The Venerable Dr Will Adam
Archdeacon of Canterbury
[archdeacon-
canterbury@diocant.org](mailto:archdeacon-canterbury@diocant.org)



OUR VISION FOR THE PARISH

.We want our Parish to be:

- Kind, safe, open, all embracing, inclusive and outward reaching.
- A place where everyone is listened to, valued, recognised, and encouraged on or introduced to their journey with God.
- A growing Christian community focused on worship and prayer, with a heart for outreach and a wish for good relationships to attract families and people of all ages.

With these aims in mind, our submission to the Diocesan Mission Action Plan last year included these goals:

- improving links with families and young people
- ensuring that our churches are places of hospitality, particularly for pilgrims
- reaffirming our commitment to the environment by maintaining our EcoChurch Silver status.



PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

We would like our new Vicar to be:

- A person of deep personal faith with the ability to communicate this through engaging worship and preaching
- A person who is approachable, enthusiastic, optimistic and a good listener
- A person with resilience who can be with their parishioners through good times and lift them when times are hard
- A person who is flexible and pragmatic, and can lead our Parish with discretion in directions which may be unexpected
- A person who is creative and able to design activities to reach out to the community outside the Church

We would like our new Vicar to have:

- leadership experience and a willingness to work in collaboration with worshippers from different traditions
- organisational and administrative skills, and the ability to manage a committee meeting
- some experience in management of a body with significant financial resources
- competent IT skills, for administration and social media purposes
- a willingness to work with a broad range of liturgical styles

We would like our new Vicar to help us:

- to reach out to the wider community and draw families and younger people to faith in our Lord
- to engage the Parish in the need to support their churches financially, for maintenance of our historic buildings and to further the work of ministry in the community
- to develop further our links with Bridge and Patricbourne CEP School and to draw children into the life of faith
- to continue and develop our outreach activities creatively
- to work with the Deanery and the Diocese in meeting the goals envisaged by the national Church

HOW A 5 CHURCH PARISH WORKS

When the five churches of the Bridge Benefice were merged into the Parish of the Bridge Group on 1st January 2020, there was some apprehension about how the new arrangements would work, with concerns about loss of independence and identity in each of the previously separate parishes. Six years later, we have five unique churches, each with their distinctive identities, who have united as a single, strong worshipping community.

Congregations

There is strength in numbers. Where the congregation in an isolated church might be depressingly small, we now celebrate one Eucharist at a different church each Sunday, and the numbers attending frequently number between 40 – 50. The services may be fewer, but attendance has soared, we have all made new friends around the Parish and the sense of a flourishing worshipping community is palpable. Each church has maintained its distinctive style of worship, with more traditional services available each month for those who prefer this. Ministry activities outside church have had greater support and the potential for growth is slowly being realised.

Administration

Since inception, the incumbency has been a full-time priest, supported by lay officers and authorised ministers; this model has been working successfully for the past six years. The administration of the Parish has been radically streamlined with the formation of a single Parochial Church Council from the previous three. The PCC currently has 20 members, comprising the Incumbent, a lay Vice Chair, the Churchwardens and elected members from each church. The PCC meets every two months to make executive decisions. The Churchwardens meet monthly to discuss the fabric, maintenance and day to day running of the churches. The Finance Committee meets before each PCC meeting, and at other times as necessary. Church teams from lay members associated with each church work together to coordinate the efforts to support their local centre of worship. The Parish employs a part-time administrator to assist with secretarial and administrative tasks.

Finances

The Parish's main source of income is from regular monthly donations collected through the Parish Giving Scheme. The PCC's finances have been rationalised with a single bank account for general expenditure. Each church maintains separate, restricted investment accounts with the CCLA. The Parish has paid the Diocesan Parish Share in full for 2025, and carries no long-term debt from the COVID years. The annual accounts are currently prepared commercially, but with the introduction of new software it is hoped that this can be brought inhouse. With annual turnover exceeding £100,000, the Parish is now registered with the Charity Commission and annual returns are published each year.

WORSHIP LIFE

The pattern of worship in the Parish has evolved since we became a single parish. There is a Parish Eucharist in a different location every Sunday morning, which attracts a large congregation of committed worshippers from across the Parish. In addition, other services are offered, ranging from traditional to lay led and family-friendly services. The current pattern of services across a typical month is as follows:

1 st Sunday	9am BCP Communion 10am Songs of Praise (lay-led)	St Mary's Nackington St Peter's Bekesbourne
2 nd Sunday	10am Parish Communion 4pm Family Service (lay-led quarterly)	St Peter's Bridge St Peter's Bridge
3 rd Sunday	9am Morning Prayer (lay-led) 10am Traditional Sung Holy Communion	St Mary's Nackington St Mary's Patrixbourne
4 th Sunday	10am Communion	St Mary's Lower Hardres
5 th Sunday (occurs once every three months)	10am Parish Communion	Rotates around the churches

Additional services take place at Easter and for other important events in the Church calendar. Christmas is catered for with Carol, Christingle and Crib services and additional Eucharists.

Music plays an important part in the life of our churches. There is a small but dedicated church choir, affiliated to the RSCM, which leads our worship on Sundays and at church festivals. The Parish has four regular organists who play for each of our churches and also for weddings, funerals and special occasions.

Regular services are held in Bridge Church for different groups from Bridge and Patrixbourne CEP school, at intervals throughout the school year. Messy church is held on a Saturday each half term, at the school.

Opportunities are offered for quiet prayer times during the week at Bridge Church. Our churches are open during the day for people to view the church and to spend time in quiet reflection there.



OUTREACH

Our outreach work brings the church directly to individuals who might not normally attend a service. It is about building relationships and promoting collaboration. We aim to have a presence in all aspects of life in the villages, meeting people, making connections and demonstrating our support directly where people live and spend their time. By working in this way, we aim to grow our worshipping community and connect with potential volunteers.

The church has strong links with Bridge and Patricbourne C of E Primary School. Together, they work to share God's message and to establish the Christian aims and vision for the life of the school. Relationships are fostered by regular visits, teaching programmes and services, some held in the school and on special occasions in Bridge Church. Links have been made with the school choir who come and sing at special services. The School received an excellent SIAMS report in September 2025, which singled out the close links with the Parish for particular mention.



Messy Church has a regular attendance of committed families. 'Little Lambs', a weekly baby and toddler group attracts young families, especially those new to the village. A Prayer Group meets on Friday mornings for prayers, coffee and chat. On the first Monday of the month, the Caring and Sharing group meet to provide mutual support. Bible groups meet for readings and discussion particularly in Lent and Advent. We have links with the local Scouts' groups who are invited to hold services in the church.

Each church has a Friends group which organises fundraising events. Our church supports volunteers from the various village groups by being present at their fundraising events. There is a Village Fête held in Bridge each July, the proceeds being shared equally by the school and the PCC. The Bridge Group are supporters of EcoChurch, part of the A Rocha project, and holders of a silver award in each of the five churches. We are proud to make connections with other groups that take practical actions on caring for God's earth.

To maintain church links with those who are unable to attend a church service, regular visits are made to the Care Homes in Bridge and Bekebourne, and home visits to those who are too unwell to get to church.





SETTING AND PARISH CONTEXT

The Bridge Group Parish was formed in January 2020 within the East Bridge Deanery of the Diocese of Canterbury and comprises five active churches. The Parish is centred on St Peter's in the semi-urban village of Bridge; there are four smaller churches in rural locations at Patricxbourne, Bekesbourne, Lower Hardres and Nackington. The Parish is located in an arc just to the south of Canterbury and is in the Canterbury City Council district and the parliamentary constituency of Canterbury.

The churches of the Bridge Group Parish are long established with histories going back to the 12th and 13th centuries. The largest, though not the oldest, is St Peters, Bridge and the four others range in size and antiquity from Patricxbourne, Bekesbourne and Nackington to Lower Hardres. Since coming together as a single parish, the Parochial Church Council has flourished and worked harmoniously. We have developed a competent, mutually supportive and financially secure organisation; the close involvement of the Parish with the Church of England School in Bridge is a particular strength.

With increased attendance and mutual support has come a new sense of confidence and purpose, demonstrated in the refurbishment and extension projects undertaken in the churches in recent months. St Mary's Nackington has had a new electrical and heating system installed and a community space opened up in the transept, while a splendid extension has been built at St Mary's Patricxbourne, offering much needed facilities for pilgrims wishing to stay overnight in the church while following one of several pilgrimage routes which pass through the village. The ancient lychgate on the path up to St Peter's Bekesbourne has recently been restored. All of this is the culmination of years of planning involving multiple grant and Faculty applications and successful fund-raising campaigns.



AMENITIES

The area is predominantly rural comprising small hamlets and villages and the significantly larger village of Bridge, which lies on the old A2 London to Dover Road, about ten minutes drive from the centre of Canterbury. There are good public transport bus and train services including the high-speed train into London St Pancras from Canterbury. The Channel Tunnel terminal at Folkestone and the ferry Port of Dover are each about 30 minutes' drive away.

The Parish is on the northern margin of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is blessed with unspoilt landscapes crossed by numerous hiking and cycle trails. There are extensive recreation grounds adjacent to the school in Bridge and at Bekesbourne. There are three pubs with excellent restaurants in Bridge, and a boutique hotel at Bridge Place whose staff help with maintenance in the churchyard at St Peter's. There are a number of popular cafes and tearooms in nearby villages, and a well stocked farm shop in Lower Hardres.

There is a range of well-regarded secondary schools situated on the south side of Canterbury. Canterbury is home to three universities and the Cathedral – the mother church of the Anglican Communion.

ST MARY'S PATRIBOURNE EXTENSION



DEMOGRAPHICS



The overall population of the Parish is around 4,000 and it reflects the major factors of being close to a small cathedral city (circa 40,000) that houses a significant number of prestigious educational institutions and the predominantly rural farming hinterland. Much of the farming is concentrated on fruit production, including an increasing number of commercial vineyards. Many parish residents work within the city or are retired professional people who bring a variety of skills and experience to their local communities. The average age of our church congregation reflects the fact that children and young people are not currently drawn to the church; a trend we should like to reverse.

CHALLENGES

- We believe that Churches need to take and understand the need for 'Change and Risk'. We accept that if we seek to protect ourselves and stay 'safe', we shall face even greater challenges in the future.
- Our congregations are generally elderly, reflecting the location and demography of the Parish. The School is very popular; many children from outside the area travel here, and from regular attendance at services throughout the school year, come to regard Bridge as 'their' church. The challenge is to get them here on Sundays! With a new Leader we aim to work together to reach out to the younger generation, embracing their wants and needs.
- In common with most rural Parishes, we face continued challenges in meeting our financial obligations to the Diocese while maintaining the fabric of our glorious but ancient church buildings. We believe in meeting these challenges rather than ignoring them, and we face the future in a stable financial situation despite recently undertaking major capital projects. This is a tribute to the hard work of many volunteers, the acumen of our finance committee and the grace of God.



SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding is of paramount importance. We have a Parish Safeguarding Officer on the PCC and have put in place the structures and procedures recommended by the Diocese and the national Church. These measures are well publicised and displayed in each church. All volunteers and PCC members undertake the required training to the appropriate level.





VICARAGE

The Vicarage is set back off the High Street, accessed via a shared tarmac drive. It is a five-bedroom detached property, constructed around 1962, centrally heated and with all services comprising:

Enclosed entrance porch

Hallway leading to lounge, patio doors to rear garden.

Internal glass doors from lounge into dining room, leading to the kitchen.

Small toilet and Utility room with door to rear garden.

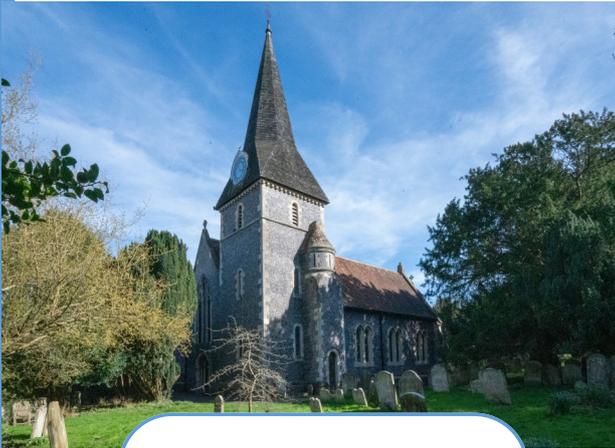
Church office/study.

Five bedrooms, family bathroom

There is an integral single garage with small storeroom. There is parking for several cars on the drive. The front garden is open, the rear garden enclosed, both mainly laid to lawn. There is a garden shed.

The Vicarage is five minutes' walk to St Peter's Church and Bridge CEP School and no more than ten minutes' drive to the other Parish churches.

CHURCH PROFILES



ST PETER'S BRIDGE

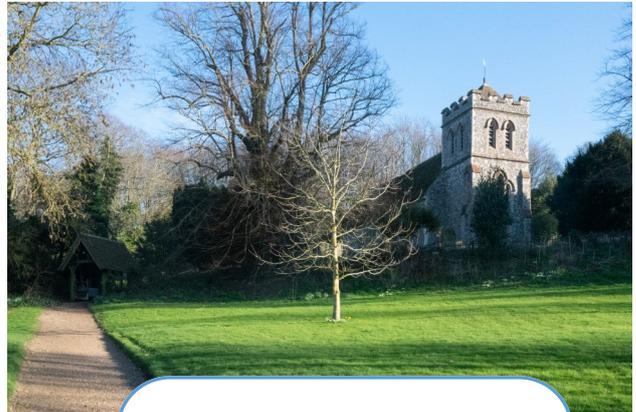
St Peter's is the largest church in the Parish. It is mostly Victorian in construction, but remains of the Norman chapel can still be seen on the arch over the west door. Access from the High Street is step free. The entrance porch was extended in the early 2000's and includes toilet facilities. Glass doors leading into the body of the church allow people entering to see into the interior and help to retain heat inside. To the rear of the north aisle there is a meeting area with facilities to serve refreshments. The building is generally in good order. Heating is gas fired by radiators.

The churchyard is closed for burials, but the Garden of Remembrance can still accept ashes.

St Peter's is a small rural church set on a hill in the centre of the village, and can seat a congregation of up to 90. It dates to the 12th century and has been lovingly restored over the years. Our beautifully renovated lychgate offers repose after the climb up the gravelled path.

The lively Bekesbourne Band of Ringers ring out a welcoming call to church for all the services and other events. They practice regularly and have recently welcomed new members.

The churchyard is open for burials. St Peter's is sometimes known as the 'church in the garden' because of the beauty of the churchyard and its outlook. We organize events in the churchyard which are inspired by the natural and built history and help us make links with Eco projects and the school.



ST PETER'S BEKESBOURNE



ST MARY'S LOWER HARDRES

Lower Hardres is a rural village to the west of the benefice, surrounded by woods and farmland. It has an excellent village hall, the focus for many activities, a farm shop and a popular pub/restaurant. The church was built in 1832 on the site of a previous church, which fell into disrepair. The building is light and airy with excellent acoustics. The church has been well maintained in recent years and the 2022 quinquennial report made only minor recommendations. The building is generally in good order. The electrical systems will need modernisation in due course, and in the longer term there are plans to install running water and a toilet.

The churchyard is open and is maintained by volunteers, with the aid of a grant from the Parish Council.

CHURCH PROFILES CONTINUED



ST MARY'S PATRIXBOURNE

St Mary's is a Grade 1 listed church dating back to the late 12th century. It is renowned for its Norman doorway, the wheel window in the chancel, and the panels of Swiss enamelled glass in the east and south windows.

The church is surrounded by a well-kept churchyard, which at present is still open for burials. There is flat access from the church gate to the communion rail.

The building is in good order. In the last year we have completed a project to build an

extension on the North side of the church. The new facilities include an accessible toilet and shower, a simple kitchen and an open meeting area. This aims to benefit not only our congregation and parishioners but also the many visitors who come to the church.

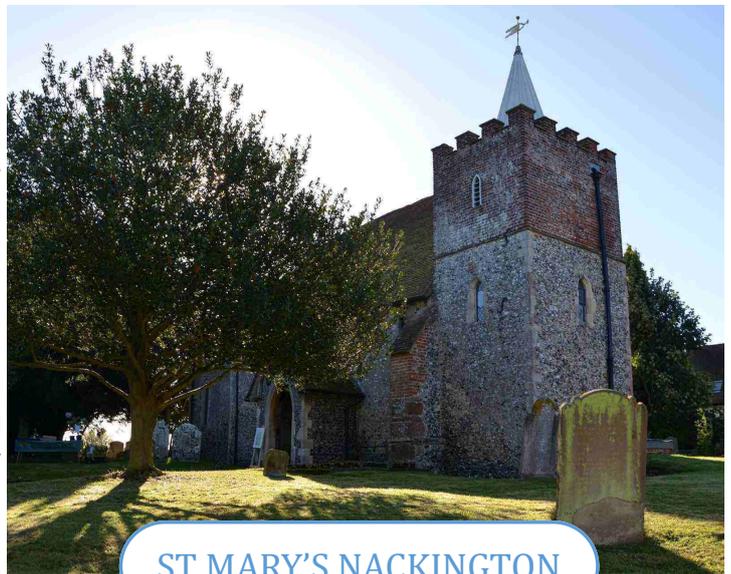
The church is located on at least four named pilgrimage and walking routes, including the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome. We consider looking after visitors and pilgrims as a major part of the mission of this church and this includes offering them overnight accommodation.

St Mary's Church is a small, Grade 1 Listed church of Norman origin, standing in its own churchyard in the hamlet of Nackington. The building is constructed of flint and stone under clay tile roofs which are supported by open timber trusses and crown posts, all of which are in good order.

The nave can seat 60 in the fixed pews but congregations of up to 100 can be accommodated for big services. The church is open daily and has an electronic time lock and internal CCTV security system. Under-pew and radiant heating was recently installed and is very effective. The church was rewired in 2014 and all internal lighting was replaced with LED bulbs.

The church and the side chapel have been recently reorganized as a flexible space for additional seating and hospitality. A Faculty and planning consent have been granted to build an accessible toilet and kitchen unit to improve the facilities and allow wider use of the building.

The churchyard is still open for burials and was extended in 2015. It receives a maintenance grant from the Parish Council for regular grass cutting.



ST MARY'S NACKINGTON