

# S. Peter on the East Cliff Folkestone



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# The Priest we seek

*Sandy beaches, relaxing cliff-top walks providing lungfuls of bracing salt-sea air and views across the Channel, an old fishing harbour, cobbled streets and busy restaurants but with excellent road and rail links to London, Paris and beyond.*

Throughout a lengthy period of interregnum, our Churchwardens and PCC have worked hard to maintain a sense of stability at S. Peter's and its wider parish. We look for a person who is able to direct and guide the congregation in terms of teaching, pastoral care, church representation and administration of the sacraments. The PCC is in the process of developing a full Mission Action Plan which we hope our new priest will help us set in motion.

- *The PCC sees it as vital that our future priest works to maintain, protect and develop the traditional beliefs and style of worship that has always been practised at S. Peter's.*
- *Although we hold regular services for our school, the congregational demographic is skewed towards the over 45s. Reaching out to young people therefore, is a specific priority and strong relationships with the school are seen as being essential.*
- *Developing strong community links and playing an active role both in the Deanery and Diocese, especially with those churches with whom we share a common bond, is also an important priority.*

We are a Resolution Parish under the Episcopal care of the Bishop of Richborough and seek a Priest of The Society. A preference is expressed for a member of the Society of the Holy Cross (SSC) and for someone with proven success in their previous parish.

When asked what they looked for in a parish priest, members of the congregation offered these thoughts:

*A priest with Christian courage, confidence and charisma, who, with a generous heart, will lead, renew and inspire us.*

*A devout man of prayer, spirit, presence and reverence, dedicated to God, to His Son Jesus Christ and to Our Lady. A man sensitive to the working of the Holy Spirit through our congregation, schools, church and parish.*

*A Priest with a good understanding of the liturgy and the Catholic tradition of the Anglican Church.*

*A Priest for whom the Presence of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar is real.*

*We need a priest who has experience outside the priesthood, energy, with an outward looking personality and who is prepared to engage with the people of the parish meeting the purpose for which it exists.*

*"I think that anyone who found their way to S. Peter's would certainly want to go again. People were friendly and several engaged me in conversation just as someone they didn't recognise."* (A recent visitor)



## About Folkestone

For almost 150 years, Folkestone was a thriving cross-Channel port on the shores of the English Channel and 26 miles from Boulogne. The town is situated on the southern edge of the North Downs which continue eastwards to form part of the White Cliffs of Dover.

Folkestone developed as a quiet fishing village but expanded rapidly both as a port and, following the arrival of the railway from London in 1843, as a 'high class' holiday resort. It became known as 'Fashionable Folkestone' and much of the town's architecture reflects its Victorian and Edwardian heyday. The town was on the front line during both World Wars and flourished until the arrival of the Channel Tunnel, which saw the port's cross-Channel ferry link close in 2001. The implementation of the European Union's common fishing policy caused great hardship to the local fishermen.

The town enjoys excellent communications both by road and rail. The high-speed rail link to London St Pancras takes just 54 minutes and has brought Folkestone within the city commuter belt whilst the influx of commuters has assisted in the town's



regeneration. The easy connections with London mean there are higher levels of day trippers in both directions while a vibrant arts community has also developed. Since the closure of the cross-Channel ferry service to Boulogne, the harbour's pier has been revamped and redeveloped, attracting many visitors to an array of bars and eateries around the restored former Folkestone Harbour railway station. Additionally, there is much ongoing investment by Sir Roger de Haan, (formerly owner of the locally-based Saga Holidays). The town has become a leading centre for arts, crafts and culinary delights and, after years in the doldrums, its fortunes are finally showing signs of much-needed revival.

The M20 motorway links Folkestone with London and the rest of the UK's motorway system. The Channel Tunnel terminal lies at the foot of the Downs on the town's western edge while nearby Dover provides frequent ferry crossings both to Calais and Dunkirk. Apart from its cathedral, Canterbury (18 miles) offers an excellent shopping centre and is a 40-minute journey by car. Further opportunities to explore the district are available on nearby Romney Marsh which offers big skies, tranquility, wildlife, 14 medieval churches and England's only desert.

There is a wide and contrasting housing stock within the parish from late Victorian terraces and post-war flats nearby the church to later housing estates which spread out towards the foot of the North Downs. Opposite S. Peter's is an interesting Garden City experiment from 1921 comprising 33 low-cost houses built in the Colonial Dutch style for the local MP, Sir Phillip Sassoon. On the low cliff top facing the English Channel, more expensive, privately-owned, detached buildings provide a sharp contrast with housing elsewhere in the parish.

A new harbour development of luxury restaurants and flats has already commenced and much of this will be in our parish, bringing us opportunities for mission in both new and old communities.

## Overview: The Church and its Parish

The Church of S. Peter on the East Cliff, is the Parish Church of the East Cliff area of Folkestone. It is situated at the top of a steep hill called The Durlocks which is where the local fishermen once laid out their nets to dry.

S. Peter's Church was built for Anglo-Catholic Worship and has been foremost in promoting and teaching the faith ever since its Consecration. That faith is taught not only in words but in its care for the local people. There are hundreds of people in the parish who do not come regularly to Church but feel they 'belong' to it. Worship at S. Peter's is richly sacramental and devotional in character being focused on the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. There is a flourishing and welcoming congregation on Sundays.

Situated on a hill overlooking the harbour, the church provided a last view of England for thousands of soldiers departing for France during the First World War. S. Peter's was also a welcoming view for refugees and for passengers arriving at Folkestone Harbour in the days of the ferry service from France. Badly blitzed during the Second World War and in recent years having suffered hurricane, fire and even earthquake, today it affords a view of the ambitious new developments taking place across the former port area and

continues to keep a watch over the fishing fleet as the boats leave and return to their anchorages in the Outer Harbour. The church is a central part of the Folkestone Harbour Conservation Area and is an English Heritage listed building, Grade II.

The town's fishermen originally worshipped at the church of S. Mary & S. Eanswythe, on the west side of the Pent Valley which once separated the town's wealthy west end from the fishermen's quarter around the harbour. The local land owner, the Earl of Radnor, eventually granted permission for a humble mission church to be built on an elevated site above the harbour which was opened for public worship in 1868. Such was its appeal and success that in 1870 the church was aggrandized and extended with the addition of a north aisle and an enlarged chancel. Since that time S. Peter's has been a place of encounter with the beauty of holiness, drawing a community of worshippers from the locality and beyond to worship together, grow in faith together, and share together in fellowship and service. We welcome Christians of all denominations to our services, as well as those whose journey of faith may just be beginning.

The adjacent clergy house and school were added at the same time forming a continuous feature on three sides of a courtyard.

Folkestone's Christian heritage is amongst the oldest in England, since S. Eanswythe founded her nunnery here in 630 AD, around the Chapel of S. Peter. The current Church is named for this chapel, long lost to the sea, but which was one of the earliest Christian churches in Kent.

The annual Blessing of the Fisheries dates from the 1890s and is one of Folkestone's oldest and most colourful traditions. The ceremony is a large and challenging undertaking for a small congregation but is the highlight of the church year. It usually takes place to coincide with S. Peter's Day at the end of June and was this year conducted by +Luke, Bishop of Richborough.

Folkestone is divided into five parishes/benefices which together form the Folkestone Group. Churches Together in Folkestone remains the main network for Churches to work together across the town.

The Parish extends from the harbour front to the North Downs and has greatly changed in character throughout its history. Slum clearance around the harbour during the 1930s saw most of the fishermen rehoused elsewhere in the town, and today the original fisherman's quarter caters mainly for summer visitors as the size and importance of the fishing fleet has been greatly diminished.



S. Peter's is one of the few remaining, traditional Anglo-Catholic Churches in East Kent. The first vicar, Fr Charles Ridsdale, was greatly influenced by the Oxford Movement which sought to restore the Church of England to its heritage of Apostolic Order and to the Catholic doctrines of the early church fathers. A significant stress on liturgy and worship, performed in order to maintain the beauty of holiness, makes worship an experience which is intended to appeal to one's whole person - to heart as well as head, to senses as well as to intellect.

In 1875, controversy arose in what became known as 'The Folkestone Ritual Case' and Fr Ridsdale was the first Anglican priest to be prosecuted under the Public Worship Regulations Act 1874. The immense publicity that the case attracted has ensured the renown of the church ever since, giving it an important place in the history of the Church of England. S. Peter's continues to be a staunch defender of Catholic Order in the church and seeks to maintain an orthodox Christian position.

## The Road to Recovery

During 2011, the future of S. Peter's was placed in jeopardy when the parish priest announced his intention to leave for the Roman Catholic Ordinariate and took the majority of the congregation with him. This left the parish in interregnum with around a dozen people remaining. Fortunately, it was preserved and held in plurality with the parish church of S. Mary & S. Eanswythe.

During the following years, S. Peter's was given the opportunity to recover and rebuild. We aimed to create in our local church a culture of permanent invitation to the heavenly and warm hospitality to all.

However, being positioned high on a cliff facing the English Channel has its price, leaving the building exposed to the gales, winds and wars over the last 150 years. This cumulative wear and tear resulted in significant impairment to the building and it was placed on the 'Heritage at Risk' register by English Heritage. In order to ensure that the building was fit for purpose, an urgent and extensive renovation to much of the church was required. Between 2014 and the end of 2018 almost £600,000 was spent on refurbishing and maintaining St Peter's.

The first challenge was to make the building fit for a congregation. Our aim was to restore it to its former Victorian glory while at the same time, seeking to foster the best in Christian art and creativity, as a heavenly pathway to the eternal. Much of the symbolism around the church commemorates Christ and His Apostles in ways which are fundamentally meaningful to all.

The second challenge was to reconnect the church to its parish and to the wider town of Folkestone and in so doing to rebuild the church community from the ground up. Alongside the building work, an extensive series of public outreach, heritage engagement and heritage arts enhancement projects were undertaken which started the work of re-connection and new growth.

These challenges are ongoing. However, the time bought for us by the plurality allowed us to do the hard work to show that the parish and church remain credible.

Having stabilised the church and started re-engaging with the people of the parish and town, we then sought to restore our historic mission to the poor of the East Cliff and into the fishing and other communities.

# The Broader Context

Folkestone has a population of 47,347 (2021 census). The Parish of S. Peter's, which encompasses most of the harbour area, is the twelfth poorest Municipal Area in Kent and 572<sup>nd</sup> nationally. Our parish deprivation rank is 1,452/12,178 although much of this is hidden.

There are currently 3,548 people who are resident in the parish, living in 1,570 registered households, in an area of 0.7 square miles. The population is 95% white and of an evenly spread age-profile which is tilted to the over 45s. The parish is 100% urban and contains a variety of housing which rises from the busy harbour up to the quieter residential area of the East Cliff and the Dover Road to housing estates of various ages.



## Attendance

There are 48 people currently on the Electoral Roll, with a regular Sunday attendance of some 30-35 people. Over 60 people attend at Christmas and Easter. In addition, the Church has been regularly used by S. Peter's Church of England Primary School both for weekly assemblies and for termly Mass.

Adult attendance considerably increases for special celebrations such as Holy Days, Confirmations etc. when the Church is often full. We also work with the Royal Naval Association for the annual Trafalgar Day Service and with the Mayors of the Cinque Ports and fishing community for the annual Blessing of the Fisheries which, depending upon the weather, is attended by large crowds.

## Services

Since the recurrence of the previous Parish Priest's ill health in October 2022, the weekly pattern of services has, of necessity, been greatly reduced. Fortunately, the congregation has remained firm and has very much acted as a Christian family, supporting each other at all times. On Sundays, there is Solemn Mass at 10.30 am and Low Mass is said on Thursdays at 12 noon. Feast Days are usually marked with an evening Solemn Mass. We follow the Stations of the Cross throughout Lent.

The congregation and non-Church going members of the Parish and fishing community still use the Church for Baptisms, Confirmations, Weddings and Funerals. Given that the population of the Parish is 3,500 people, we have room for improvement.

## Interaction

Along with other churches in the town, we helped to found, and continue to support, the Folkestone Rainbow Centre which assists for local people in urgent need. Every December, members of our congregation take their turn to provide winter meals for the homeless and contributes vital foodstuffs throughout the year. Other charities that we have regularly supported include: Aid to the Church in Need; Friends of Kent Churches Ride and Stride and Brooke.

The church provides a focal point for largely social activities taking place in the parish, such as Coffee Mornings (before Mass every Thursday), regular Sunday lunches and small exhibitions. We give access to Folkestone Walking Tours to share the heritage of the church with visitors to the town and also open for annual Heritage Open Days. During summer 2025 the church has played an active part in the Creative Folkestone Triennial – a newly commissioned exhibition of art in the public realm – which has attracted many visitors and raised welcome finances towards the upkeep of S. Peter's.

*"Of all the churches we know, S. Peter's is outstanding in the warmth and kindness extended to visitors."* (Recent visitors)

## Finance

Throughout the plurality with the neighbouring parish of S. Mary and S. Eanswythe, the congregation worked hard to rebuild S. Peter's, its mission and financial position. It has managed to meet its half of the parish share. Regular grants from the Ridsdale Trust, which exists to support Anglo-Catholic mission in the parish, have been essential for maintenance costs.

The current position of the church is viable and we seek a priest to help us to fully flourish.

*The church financial details are supplied on a separate document.*

## Diocese and Deanery

The Diocese of Canterbury actively explores ways of proclaiming God's love afresh while building on the heritage of more than 1400 years of service to this part of Kent. Churches of all traditions are being true to the faith they have received and also working together to serve our communities.

S. Peter's forms part of the Elham Deanery which includes the nine Folkestone churches and 14 surrounding rural parishes.

We are one of the few remaining Resolution Parishes in East Kent and provide a shrine of peace, tranquility and a real sense of holiness which is available to all who seek comfort and spiritual solace. People attend S. Peter's both from the Parish and from across South-East Kent. The church acts as a magnet for those who both love and wish to maintain the traditional Catholic style of worship.

Throughout the lengthy period of the previous priest's illness and the subsequent interregnum, services were maintained by two retired priests who, by virtue of their time and energy, allowed the church to remain viable during a difficult period. The church has been greatly assisted by the Bishop of Richborough's diocesan representative whose help has been invaluable, especially since the death of one of our assistant priests in January 2025.



# The Local Schools

## ***S. Peter's Church of England Primary School***

S. Peter's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School has been serving the Folkestone Harbour area and the wider community since 1872. Living out its motto, *Inspired by God's Word*, it seeks to live out its Christian Values (which can be found on the school's website) both in school and in the wider community. It currently has 102 pupils, 46% of whom receive free school meals.

Sharing the same site as the church and vicarage means that the school has a long tradition of involvement with S. Peter's Church. Pupils participate in a variety of services which often take the form of a Mass to mark holy days and festivals as well as significant landmarks in school life.



The school recognises its dual position as a Diocesan School in a Society Parish and enjoys strong relationships with both the Bishop of Dover and the Bishop of Richborough.

Each year, the school and incumbent have worked together to prepare a number of children for baptism, confirmation or first communion and this is something that we would very much like to continue and expand.

In recent years the school has placed a large emphasis on developing child-led worship both in collective worship and in Eucharistic services. The school was rated as 'Good' by Ofsted in a 2019 inspection and 'Outstanding' in a SIAMs inspection in July 2018.

## ***S. Mary's Church of England Primary Academy & Nursery School***

S. Mary's School is a church founded Academy that follows a strong Christian ethos and promotes the Christian character of the school through all areas of its work from curriculum design through to school leadership. It has 479 pupils with a capacity, as built, for 420.

The school continues to have close ties to the church of S. Mary and S. Eanswythe but as it is now in the 'newer' parish of S. Peter, the previous Vicar of S. Peter's took an active part in the life of the school. This growing relationship was unfortunately disrupted due to the pandemic and then by his lengthy period of illness.

### ***Martello Primary School***

This new school is part of Turner Schools Trust which took over the site in January 2017. Although close to the church, as the full opening fell during the interregnum no relationship has currently been developed. It has the capacity for 210 pupils.

## The Vicarage

The spacious and family-sized Victorian vicarage is situated between the church and S. Peter's School; all three are parts of one continuous S. Peter's building. There is a separate garage and a reserved parking space outside the front door of the vicarage.



On the ground floor is an entrance hall, a large dining room, lavatory and shower, study and kitchen (with garden access). There is also a door downstairs to three small cellar rooms, which together provide considerable cellarage. The central heating/water boiler is also situated in one of these.

The first floor provides two large bedrooms and a sitting room with a veranda, with one of the finest vicarage views, looking over the garden to the harbour and across the Straits of Dover to France.

The second floor provides three more substantial bedrooms, one with a partially fitted dressing room. There is a large airing cupboard around the hot water tank. There is also a bathroom with bath and shower and a separate lavatory.

# Citations

## The Bishop of Richborough

*"S. Peter's, Folkestone, has a long history of serving this coastal community in the Diocese of Canterbury through the promotion of the Catholic Faith lived out in the sacramental, liturgical, and pastoral life of the clergy and faithful. Like many of our coastal communities, the challenges of deprivation are real and the imperative of catholic life in all its goodness, truth and beauty continues to be a source of hope and dignity for those who live here as well as for those who find their Christian life and discipleship nourished and nurtured at S. Peter's but who live in the wider area. The appointment of a new parish priest is something that we rejoice in as look forward, with confidence, to all that lies ahead. The opportunities for further growth and engagement with the parish community are manifest. The gift of the Church of England primary school, integral to the physical as well as spiritual architecture of S. Peter's is to be rejoiced in and developed. Similarly, a missional priest, faithful in his celebrations of the Mysteries of our salvation, zealous for the Gospel and the pastoral care of those whose Cure he shares, will ensure that Christ is known, loved, and served in this place and generation."*

The Right Reverend Luke Irvine-Capel  
*nostra autem conversatio in caelis*



## The Archdeacon of Ashford

*"I am grateful for the particular witness and mission that S. Peter's has given over the years, supported by excellent worship. I believe that the parish has a new vigour for today's mission, rooted in its strong, catholic tradition, which can not only change lives for the people of East Folkestone but also be a resource to the wider town, deanery and diocese. I look forward to working with a new priest who is confident in their faith and ready to nurture that mission."*

The Ven. Fr. Darren Miller

# Application and Contact Details

The Churchwardens will be happy to answer any questions and can be contacted as shown below:

John Hendy 07947 064863

Andy Kemp, MBE 07823 573831

**The deadline for applications is: 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

**Applications should be submitted to:**

Mrs Louise Mills, PA to the Archdeacon of Ashford,

The Archdeaconry, Pett Lane, Charing, Ashford, Kent, TN27 0DL

<[louise.mills@archdeacashford.org](mailto:louise.mills@archdeacashford.org)>

The appointment is subject to DBS disclosure.





