

The Parish Church of
St Thomas à Becket at
Cliffe with All Saints
Lewes, East Sussex



Harvey's brewery harvest thanksgiving service

ABOUT OUR CHURCH September 2020

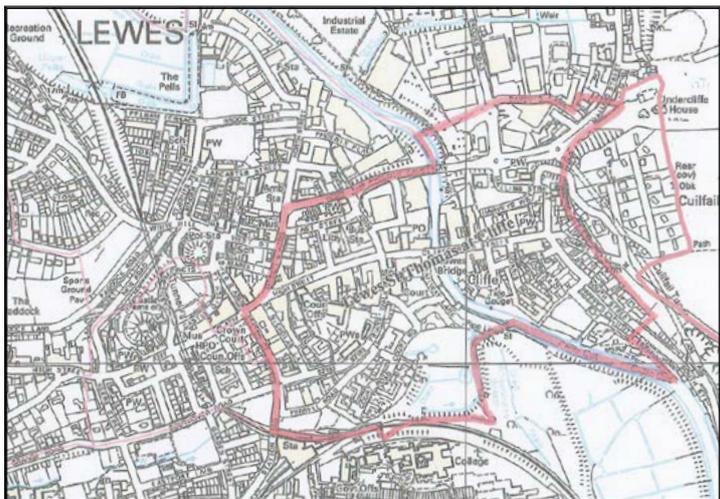
www.st-thomas-lewes.org.uk

The United Benefice of St Anne, St Michael, and
St Thomas à Becket at Cliffe, with All Saints.



The Parish

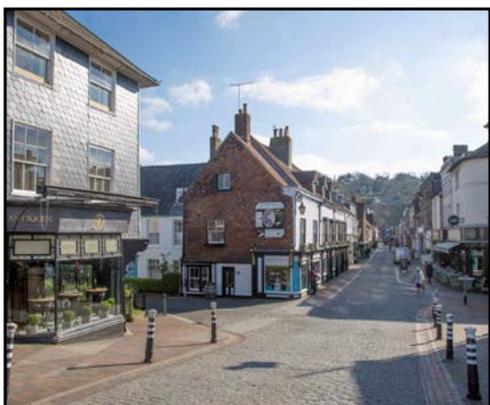
The parish encompasses the former parish of All Saints in Lewes and extends from: Cuilfail and the Cliffe Industrial Estate in the east, to Station and Market Streets in the west; and from Davey's Lane in the north, to Court Road and the railway station in the south.



The parish boundary - (outer red line)

St Thomas' church is situated at the east end of Cliffe High Street at the bottom of the East Sussex county town, surrounded by small shops and residential accommodation, about a mile from St Anne's church and half a mile from St Michael's.

The Community



Cliffe High Street is a vibrant area of Lewes, largely pedestrianized, with a variety of small shops and restaurants.

At weekends, especially when there are market stalls, Cliffe High Street can be very busy with townspeople and visitors enjoying the various antique and second-hand book-shops and pavement cafés. It is a very attractive place to wander, shop, eat and drink.

St Thomas is very much part of the Cliffe community. For example, we are pleased to welcome Harvey & Son's brewery for their annual Harvest Thanksgiving Service which is extremely popular with supporters from across the county.

The church is open throughout the day for visits and private devotions. We receive many appreciative

comments from people who come in for times of quietness and prayer and from the many tourists who visit the historic town. Local residents, in particular, would be distressed if St Thomas were not open all day as many people who many not attend services use the church regularly for times of peace and reflection.

The church is only used for worship, prayer and meditation: all other activities take place in Cliffe Hall next door.

The population of the parish is around 2,250 with average residential turnover. Dwellings comprise purpose-built flats, apartments above shops and smaller houses in residential streets. There are four units of retirement or sheltered accommodation, with Br George taking Home Communion as part of his outreach ministry to those who find it hard to get to church.

Let us go into the House
of the Lord ...
“ A loving community;
particularly evident during the
Covid lockdown ”

The age profile of the parish is varied: extending from young, growing families and people who commute to Brighton, Eastbourne and London, to older, retired people.

There are two medical practices and the Social Services Phoenix Day Care Centre in the parish. There are also three places of worship belonging to other Christian denominations.

Church Tradition and Services

The *Book of Common Prayer* is used for all services



at St Thomas. The PCC is a corporate member of the Prayer Book Society while some of the congregation are personal members of the organisation. All readings are from the 1611 Authorised Version.

The congregation and PCC wish this (1662) traditional liturgy to continue. The only exception are baptisms,



weddings and funerals when the families involved choose the liturgy.

We are fortunate to have Fr. Herbert Bennett licensed to the benefice with special responsibility for St Thomas'. The SSM priest celebrates Holy Communion on Sunday

mornings (with one-in-four off).

We rely on the services of PTO priest the Revd George Linnegar (known as Brother George) for weekday services. He says matins and celebrates Holy Communion every morning (Monday to Saturday) and leads evening prayer daily; and Thursday mid-morning said Communion.

On Sunday mornings, the service is accompanied by Merbecke's organ setting and hymns are from the *New English Hymnal*.

Br. George is a retired priest (with PTO) who has served at St. Thomas for over forty years; he is well known for his pastoral work. All visiting priests are welcome and it has been customary for the Rector to visit once a month to lead the Sunday morning service which should dovetail with Fr Herbert's Sundays 'off'.

During the last twelve months, the Sunday Eucharist has generally been attended by 30 people.

The following numbers attended special services:

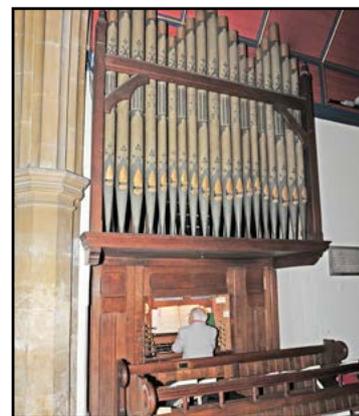
- Harvey's Brewery Thanksgiving service: 210
- Remembrance Sunday: 46
- three Christmas services: 87
- six Holy Week services: not held in 2020 due to Covid.



One baptism, (a wedding postponed due to Covid) six funerals and three memorial services took place during the last year.

Electoral Roll and Profile of the Congregation

There are xx people on the Electoral Roll, xx of whom live in the parish. Several people come from a distance for the *Book of Common Prayer* liturgy while some are from other denominations, and we are often joined by visitors to Lewes.



The peace which the world cannot give
 “ The only place I can find true peace.”

We strive to maintain the Prayer Book tradition as envisaged by the Church of England Liturgical Commission's report *Transforming Worship* (2007). The relaxed atmosphere encourages people who are in the process of returning to church attendance. Visitors often comment on the feeling of calm and friendliness.

Church Groups and Links With Other Churches

There are flower and cleaning teams, and a team which organises refreshments after morning service each Sunday.



St Thomas supports a number of charities, listed in the Annual Report.

The Russian Orthodox Church in Sussex use St Thomas for their services. This arrangement is valued by both groups and the proper agreements are in place.

The Church Building, Environs and Patronage

The church is in a conservation area and is Grade II* listed. Built of flint and stone, it is in the centre of the Cliffe which was a separate area until May 1881 when it was incorporated into the borough of Lewes.

The area known as "the Cliffe" is a marsh on the East

side of the river Ouse. Possibly cultivated earlier, it was certainly settled in the Saxon period and may have had a chapel, as it is recorded that in the 9th century the

O worship the Lord in the
beauty of holiness ...

“ The use of the BPC; the stillness and reverence of Sunday worship, and that the church is open for private prayer and reflection as well as daily services are so important. ”

Archbishops of Canterbury held “peculiar jurisdiction” over the Cliffe. Later, the Archbishops of Canterbury were granted the right to hold two fairs a year on the ground to the north of the church still known as the Fair Place.



It is recorded that in the late 12th century a chapel of the Fraternity of St Thomas, a cell of the Collegiate Church of St. Michael the Archangel at

Malling, was erected here and dedicated to St Thomas of Canterbury. It was probably used as a Chapel of Ease for the brothers as they journeyed to the Priory in Lewes.

The Patrons, Vicars and Rectors are recorded on the board in the Tower. The Patrons were: from 1349, the Dean and Canons of South Malling; from 1574, Archbishops of Canterbury; and from 1841, the Crown.

The present church building dates from between Norman and Victorian periods. There has never been a burial ground beside the church, but there was one nearby on higher ground in Malling Street. In about 1970 due to road widening, the remains from it were re-interred in the Lewes cemetery.

The parish pump was placed by the church in 1804; the present metal case dates from 1830. Behind the church is the old fire station now used as a silversmith's studio.

Notable features inside include: the hagioscope (or squint) cut into the 12th century wall linking the

chancel to the south aisle; the royal coats of arms of Elizabeth I, dated 1598, modelled in plaster and those of Georges I and II, painted on panel; and the board in the tower commemorating the foundation of the Feoffees trust of 1604.

The clock was made by James Locker of Ditchling in 1670; a new dial with a minute hand was installed in 1817. The ring of four bells includes one dated 1619. The font of 1754 is of Sussex marble. The painting of The Ascension, dated 1645, is possibly Spanish.

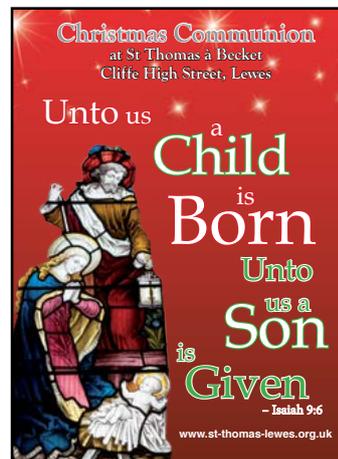
From time to time the tower moves; as it is built on a marsh, this movement prevents it from sinking. This has recently created cracks and crumbling stonework in the nave. The faculty for these repairs is in place and work is due to start in May 2013. Otherwise, the building is generally in good condition.

Day-to-day maintenance is undertaken by members of the congregation and the local community. The antiquity of the building, the peaceful atmosphere, the simple manner in which the interior, exterior and garden are maintained, are considered strong assets to the Cliffe by local residents.

The Cliffe Feoffees

This is a separate charity whose aim is to support those in need in the parish and the upkeep of the church. The Feoffees' generous support of the church includes a monthly allowance, financial help with building repairs and free use of Cliffe Hall.

Cliffe Hall (a modern, purpose-built building adjacent to the church) is used by St Thomas and many other groups as a social centre for community activities.



It is part of the Churchwardens' duties to be Feoffee Trustees.

Communications and Social Events

Parish News is distributed each month with details of services, events, dates and church news. The church also has its own web-site at www.st-thomas-lewes.org.uk which is updated regularly and includes a download section.

We produce Christmas cards and Easter cards with a seasonal message and details of services, which are distributed widely.

Parish social and fundraising events include: summer and Christmas fairs, Shrove Tuesday pancake party, harvest supper, carol singing and social evening, coffee mornings and tea parties. These events are important to us in maintaining our close links with the Cliffe community.

We welcome Lewes' MP to a number of key events and services and she attends if her diary permits. Additionally, the Mayor and local councillors attend significant events and services when invited.

Mission and Evangelism

We look forward very much to renewing our Mission Action Plan once a new Rector is appointed, likely early in 2021.

Meanwhile we engage with local traders and those living in the parish through regular communication and by having our doors open every day.

Enter his gates with
thanksgiving ...
“ St Thomas' is a truly wonderful
community where everyone is
accepted and welcomed ”

The Future

St Thomas values being part of the Benefice with St Anne and St Michael and looks for a new incumbent who will respect the existing arrangements, visiting St Thomas regularly and chairing the PCC meetings.

It is essential that the new incumbent should respect

and maintain St Thomas' Prayer Book tradition and afford Fr Herbert and Br. George whatever help they may require.

We will appreciate a new Rector who will give strong, sensitive leadership which:

- * respects the three churches' traditions and differences,
- * encourages collaborative working between the three churches,
- * enhances the Benefice as a whole and the constituent churches within, in reaching out to our various communities within the Benefice.

and into his Courts with
praise...
“ That St Thomas', my local
parish church, treasures the BCP is
wonderful. ”

