

St Mary's Sundridge with Ide Hill and Toys Hill

Welcome

Welcome to our Profile for the Parish of Sundridge with Ide Hill and Toys Hill.

Our aim in this document is to give you an overview of our churches, our communities and our strengths and challenges.

We will introduce you to our:-

- local town and surrounding area
- churches
- communities
- services
- additional church activities
- Deanery
- PCC and support staff
- Finances
- challenges and opportunities

What we can offer:

- friendly church and village communities which long to see the Parish thrive and grow
- an opportunity to build on the foundations of faith and service already present in the congregations
- vibrant and active villages set in an area of outstanding natural beauty in which it is wonderful to live, work and relax

Welcome to the Villages

The Parish of Sundridge with Ide Hill and Toys Hill, which owes its original boundaries to its Saxon origins, is about six miles long and has a width of one mile in the north, extending to three miles in the south. The Parish currently comprises three villages and is situated in a rural area close to Sevenoaks. It lies within the Green Belt and contains areas of outstanding natural beauty and conservation areas.

The village of **Sundridge** is in the lovely valley of the river Darent. **Ide Hill** and **Toys Hill** are high on the Greensand Ridge with breath-taking views across the Weald. The terrain includes many acres of National Trust woodland which attract numerous visitors. Two wildlife reserves are close by, one on the southern border of the Parish close to Bough Beech reservoir and another about a mile to the east near Sevenoaks.

There are many beautiful walks and public bridleways surrounding the Parish, with the Pilgrims Way crossing the northern edge.

Ide Hill is a hilltop village centred around a village green and is about two and a half miles up the hill from **Sundridge**. The hamlet of **Toys Hill**, situated a mile to the west along the Greensand Ridge, was incorporated into the Parish in 2001.

Travel

The journey from Sevenoaks mainline station takes 35 minutes into central London (London Bridge, Waterloo East, Charing Cross and Cannon Street). The bus station in Sevenoaks serves the local area well and the M25 is on the doorstep. In spite of the accessibility to London, the surrounding countryside is stunning, which is why it is such a sought-after area in which to live.

Schools

Not only do both Sundridge and Ide Hill have Church of England primary schools, but there are also plenty of other primary schools in the area, together with two Church of England secondary schools, six first-rate grammar schools and a good choice of academies and independent schools which are just a bus ride away.

Surrounding Area

Along the A25 westward is the neighbouring village of Brasted. Within easy reach are the towns of Sevenoaks, Westerham, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells which have a good variety of shops and businesses. Within a 20-minute drive along the M25 there is the large Bluewater Shopping Centre.

Sevenoaks is our nearest town – less than a 10-minute drive from the Rectory. It is a market town with a traditional High Street. Knole Park, with Knole House (run by the National Trust and home of the Sackville family), extends to the edges of the town itself and the Vine Cricket Ground at the north end of the High Street is one of the oldest in England.

Sevenoaks has a wide range of individual shops in the centre as well as several large supermarkets and service outlets on the outskirts. The town has a leisure and sports centre, a library, a theatre and cinema, as well as a weekly market and a Farmer's Market on Saturdays.

Our Communities – Sundridge

St Mary's Church Sundridge

There is evidence that a church stood on this site well before the Norman Conquest – Sundridge, listed Grade I, gets its first known recorded mention in 862. Possibly because the village lies near the Pilgrims Way, it has, from its earliest days, been associated with the See of Canterbury and the Archbishop is still its Patron. Some of the tower is Norman and the main body of the building dates from the 1200s. It is a church of some grandeur and the chancel and sanctuary, in particular, are unusually spacious for a village church which seats over 200. The fine timber and shingled spire was added in the 1400s and still contains the original timbers. There are three fine memorial brasses on the floor at the front of the nave dating from the 15th and 16th century.

There is a very beautiful chandelier, given by Bishop Tenison in 1726, which is still lit for services of Holy Communion. The pipe organ was built by JW Walker in 1864 and there are six bells in the tower, last recast and rehung in 2005, which are regularly rung by our own team of bellringers as well as visiting groups.

Surrounding the church is a fine churchyard with peaceful views over the countryside and the North Downs.

Sundridge Village

Sundridge is situated on the A25 and has a population of around 2600. It has a local shop that 'sells everything', the White Horse pub, a Social Club, village hall, fine art picture gallery, furniture and lighting shop, medical centre, two garden centres and a couple of clusters of small businesses.

There is an eclectic mix of homeowners, from a small amount of modern social housing through to several very old historic buildings. The village itself is steeped in history. Domesday mentions Sundridge church and, given the fact that many Saxon churches are not mentioned, this may suggest that it had some importance to the Normans. We are very lucky to have our own Church of England primary school which is joined with the neighbouring village of Brasted, the pupils are at present equal from both villages i.e. 50% attend from Brasted; 50% from Sundridge. We have an active Parish Council and a joint Gardening Club with Brasted and Ide Hill.

Our Communities - Ide Hill

St Mary's Church Ide Hill

Is a lovely example of a Victorian church, listed Grade II*. It was built in 1865 and replaced an earlier chapel on the same site. The chancel was beautifully painted in memory of President Kennedy in 1963 as a gift from a parishioner. The altar screen is intricately carved and features various small creatures hidden in the decoration. There is seating for approximately 100. The church, which stands at the highest point of Kent, proudly overlooks the village green. The steeple is lit at night; becoming a true focal point for villagers and visitors who pass through. It is one of the few churches in Kent that is open 365 days of the year.

Ide Hill Village

Ide Hill sits on top of the Greensand Ridge and is a quintessential English village, with a village green surrounded by a church, school, and pub.

The population of around 850 is a socio-economically mixed group, well reflected in both the church congregation and the local Church of England primary school.

There is a large recreation ground with a Scout Hut and a thriving community shop serving both locals and visiting walkers and cyclists.

There are a number of flourishing community-based activities including the football and cricket teams, a joint Gardening Club with Brasted and Sundridge, the Ide Hill Society and a Cub and Scout Group for boys and girls.

One of the highlights of the year is the Spring Fair, held on the village green, at the end of May, with its tradition of tug-of-war, children's displays, the Scout sausage-and-burger stand, bookstall, traditional games, and a variety of stalls. This is an opportunity for us to hold a Flower Festival over the same weekend.

Our Communities - Toys Hill

The Chapel

Services are held in a wonderful little hall-cum-chapel built in 1910. The internal walls are covered in pre-war German religious posters donated when there was an Anglo-German Friendship House opposite.

The altar is at the back of the stage, protected by screens. The hall will seat about 70 but the annual Crib Service on Christmas Eve often attracts more than 95, squeezed in together with the unfeasibly large Christmas tree which is a Toys Hill tradition.

A monthly Holy Communion (BCP) service is held in Toys Hill on the first Sunday of the month.

Carol singing round the village in December is always well supported.

The Hamlet of Toys Hill

Toys Hill lies one mile to the west of Ide Hill on the Greensand Ridge. Around eighty houses are spread out across the two roads that intersect almost outside the Village Hall.

Set in an area of outstanding natural beauty, the National Trust car park at Toys Hill is crowded every weekend. Visitors also flock to the National Trust's Emmetts Garden, one of the world's pre-eminent collections of high-altitude plants. Octavia Hill, one of the founders of the National Trust, lived in Toys Hill and funded the electrification of the well which, at the time, was one of the deepest in England.

Nowadays, Toys Hill works hard to retain its community spirit. The Village Hall is the focal point for talks, quizzes, and pure 'catch-up' social events. The highlight of the year is the Village Show to which everybody, young and old, is encouraged to contribute.

Many of the local children attend Ide Hill C of E Primary School, which is within walking distance across the fields.

Our Services

Services

1st Sunday

9.15 Toys Hill Holy Communion (BCP)
10.30 Sundridge Parish Holy Communion

2nd Sunday

10.30 Ide Hill Parish Holy Communion

3rd Sunday

10.30 Sundridge Parish Holy Communion

4th Sunday

10.30 Ide Hill Parish Morning Worship

5th Sunday

Alternates between Sundridge and Ide Hill

Other Services Throughout the Year

As well as our regular weekly programme of services, worship throughout the year includes special services. **New Year's Day** is celebrated in Sundridge with **Ring in the Bells**, a short midday service which begins with mulled wine and mince pies as the congregation listens outside to the pealing bells. Easter services begin with **Palm Sunday** in Ide Hill when we walk across the village green following a donkey. In June we have an **Open-Air Service** on the Ide Hill village green which is accompanied by the Edenbridge Band. **Harvest Festival** is followed by a harvest 'Bring and Share' lunch. **Remembrance** at the Sundridge service is accompanied by a trumpeter and the service at Ide Hill includes the local Scout group. Special Christmas services include the **Christingle Service** on Advent Sunday at Sundridge, the **Christmas Tree Service** at Ide Hill, **Carols by Candlelight** later in the month at Sundridge and then a **Crib Service** at Toys Hill during the afternoon of Christmas Eve.

Additional Church Activities

Bible Study

This group meets fortnightly and is an excellent opportunity to get to know both the Bible and each other.

Forest Church

There is a monthly Forest Church service aimed at the younger members of the congregation. Its home is on the village green outside Toys Hill village hall but on occasion it is incorporated into the 10.30 services.

Community Support Group

Initially formed by a team from the Parish Council, the Church and Fundridge in response to Covid, this group at the outset supported members of the community in need and continues actively to identify and provide assistance in both Sundridge and Ide Hill.

Flower Festival and Service at Ide Hill

This is an annual event. Last year, the theme was 'Happy and Glorious' in celebration of the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee and it attracted hundreds of visitors to the church. There is a ***Songs of Praise*** on the Sunday afternoon.

Friends of St Mary's Sundridge

The main focus of this extremely active group is to raise money to take care of, and enhance, the fabric of St Mary's Sundridge. Its calendar of events in the past year has included a guided tour of Chevening House and a tea party celebrating the Platinum Jubilee.

Friends of Ide Hill Church

There is a recently-formed Friends of Ide Hill Church which is very active. Events over the past year have included a golf day and a concert during the Christmas Tree Festival weekend.

Village Magazines

Both villages have an on-line newsletter.

The Deanery

There are 15 parishes in the Deanery, some of them grouped into teams, covering the town of Sevenoaks and the villages that surround it. The churches are very varied theologically, with a mixture of male and female clergy. There are two churches which have passed resolutions to limit the ministry of ordained women in their parishes and are under Alternative Episcopal Oversight. There are also churches in the Deanery signed up to Inclusive Church.

Despite these differences, colleagues support each other well through the Deanery Chapter, and through a Deanery Google Group where advice is often sought on various aspects of parish ministry and help can be sought. Deanery Synod usually meets two or three times a year.

While the area may appear to be prosperous, with many commuters travelling up to the city, there are pockets of poverty, both in the town and, often rather hidden, in the more rural areas. There are two foodbanks operating in the Deanery, which are well supported by local churches, schools and other organisations.

Churches Together in Sevenoaks is currently struggling to attract people to take responsibility for running it but attempts to draw together churches of various denominations in Sevenoaks. Churches Together organise some ecumenical events and have initiated various projects like a family Contact centre, and groups to support families locally."

The Revd. Canon Anne Le Bas
Vicar, St Peter and St Paul, Seal
Area Dean, Sevenoaks Deanery

Support Staff and the PCC

We have a retired Deacon with PTO, and a Reader who assist with our services in the Parish.

The PCC comprises 6 members from the 3 villages in the Parish. On average it meets 10 times a year.

We have a Parish organist and a Tower Captain for our team of bell ringers in Sundridge who practise every Thursday evening.

Finances

The absence of our Rector from the community, and the associated costs of covering for her, has depleted the finances from the fairly strong position she inherited. Villagers, not necessarily active church members, have remained loyal despite the absence of an active incumbent and monthly givings have remained constant.

Florence Harding Trust

In 1973 Florence Harding, a parishioner, bequeathed a third of her estate to the church.

We support various charities which include:

- The Royal British Legion
- The Children's Society
- Sharp Memorial School for the Blind, India
- Loaves and Fishes
- Porchlight

Challenges and Opportunities

After a difficult period in the life of the Parish over the past six years we are looking for somebody who can bring healing, reconciliation, and recovery to the Parish. In addition, we would like to explore the possibility of joining with the neighbouring parish of Brasted in order to lead us into a more secure and hopeful future. We would welcome an infusion of new energy and leadership to encourage us all to keep on working for the glory of God.

The greatest opportunities we have for growth in the Parish are our Church of England primary schools and we would very much like to develop even stronger links with them.

We look forward to meeting you.

Parish of Sundridge with Ide Hill and Toys Hill

Websites

A Church Near You

site currently under re-construction

www.achurchnearyou.com

Rochester Diocese

www.rochester.anglican.org

Parish Council

www.sundridgewithidehill-pc.gov.uk

Sundridge & Brasted CofE School

www.sundridge.kent.sch.uk

Ide Hill School

www.idehill.eschools.co.uk