

PROFILE FOR THE CHURCH OF ST. OSWALD, KING & MARTYR, PADDLESWORTH.

Hasted, the historian, wrote over two hundred years ago: "Paddlesworth is the highest ground and the lowest church in the whole county. It is a very small parish with only three or four mean cottages, and the inhabitants are poor indeed." He was slightly wrong, I believe we are only the highest ground in East Kent, and even that is disputed with West Hougham.

There was an old original doggerel harping upon the old subject, written many years ago and therefore with no aspersion upon the present parson, Peter.

The highest ground,
The lowest steeple,
The ugliest parson,
The poorest people.

But the people of Paddlesworth decided on another version which is on display in the Cat & Custard Pot Public House within a stones throw of the Church and where the key can be borrowed if you would like to have a look around. I warn you now; you will have to meet with Jeanne Wiggin's approval before it will be handed over ☺

The new one goes.
The highest ground,
The lowest steeple,
The poorest parish,
The fewest people

According to the various histories that I have read: Although the present church seems to date from early Norman times, indications of an earlier structure were discovered during reparations carried out in 1870. It is not improbable that the original church owed its foundations to St. Ethelburga, the foundress and first abbess, of the neighbouring nunnery of Lyminge. The church is dedicated to St. Oswald, King and Martyr and is the only church in Kent dedicated to this saint. St Oswald was the King of Northumbria who eventually succeeded St Ethelburga's husband Edwin, who had been slaughtered in battle by Penda. Oswald lived from 605 to 642. Raised on Iona, he felt called to retake his kingdom after it had been divided into 2 parts which had reverted to their previous pagan ways. On succeeding he then proceeded to spread Christianity throughout his kingdom with the help of St. Aidan, a task which had been started by St. Ethelburga and St. Paulinus. Although Ethelburga had fled from Northumbria in terror when her husband King Edwin was killed in 643 she allowed her daughter to be married to Oswalds younger brother Oswy when Oswy in his turn became King, thus once again reuniting the Kingdoms of Northumbria and Kent.

The Church which is built of large flints, with dressings of Caen stone It consists of a small nave measuring externally 40 feet by 23 feet, with a chancel measuring 16 feet by 15 feet. With many other interesting features that are mentioned in the guide book. The full lecture and guided tour takes about an hours.....

We are part of the Benefice of Lyminge under the care of Peter and Vanessa Ashman and between them they take the vast majority of services. We also have three trained worship leaders who are able to step in to take morning or evening prayer. This is over and above the responsibilities given to Churchwardens.

Church services at St. Oswald's are
every 2nd Sunday in the month, 11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, which is prayer book
every 4th Sunday in the month, 6.30 p.m. Evensong also prayer book
plus every 5th Sunday there is a Healing/Wholeness service at 6.30 p.m

There are a few more properties now, but not many. I believe 15 within the parish boundary, which include several farm houses scattered quite widely. We have 14 parishioners on the Church Electoral Roll, 4 of whom are not resident within the parish but who are very strong on the PCC. There are 7 Tax efficient planned givers. The average weekly attendance is 9 adults but this number increases to up to 40 at festivals, when it becomes standing room only. We have no teenagers that we are aware of within the Parish, but we do have a small number of younger children who attend the occasional services such as harvest, crib service and festival picnics when we adapt our services to accommodate them and may well be all found doing the actions to such hymns as Great Big God, and He's my Superhero, which can come as a bit of a shock to first time visitors, but we are always very pleased to see all ages and endeavour to make them welcome and encourage them to pay many return visits. Between the collections at services and the Planned Givers we are just about able to cover our parish share at the moment, but this may well change in the near future. We provide refreshments after the 11:00 communion service, which can be a bit of a challenge as we have no running water or other facilities.

One of our main sources of outreach is the local, aforementioned pub, the Cat and Custard Pot who host a lot of our fund raising events and advertise our services and activities for us. Our other staunch supporters are Mary and Alastair Biggart who live in St Oswald House just across the field from the church. The Biggarts have for several years provided a very welcoming home which they throw open for Parish Parties and more importantly Quiet Days and Retreats, with the use of the church for services and quiet contemplation. Sadly they will be leaving us soon to join their family in The Isle of Man, but if you know of anyone who wishes to own and run a home suitable for a Retreat Centre they will be pleased to hear from you. But you had better get in quick as I understand they are advertising with a rather large London Church to see if they are interested. In the meantime we hope to carry on encouraging groups to take advantage of our beautiful church and peaceful surroundings for their own study days and the pub are happy to arrange private afternoon teas by prior arrangement. Please contact Peter Ashman or myself for further details.