

# FRIENDS of KENT CHURCHES



**Annual Report 2023**  
**AGM: Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2024**



**St Peter & St Paul, Trotsicliffe**



**St Peter, Newenden: font  
Front cover: All Saints, Ulcombe**

# FRIENDS OF KENT CHURCHES

**A visit to St Peter & St Paul, East Sutton ME17 3EA and  
All Saints, Ulcombe ME17 1DN**

**73rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
Saturday 11th May 2023**

**We meet at 2.00pm** at St Peter & St Paul, East Sutton for a talk on the church and then go to All Saints, Ulcombe, which is about 2 miles to the east, for the AGM. The AGM will be followed by a talk on the church and by tea. Parking at East Sutton is on Church Lane, which runs past the church; at Ulcombe the church has a car park.

St Peter & St Paul, East Sutton is a 14th century building with extensive 15th century embellishments, including south chapel, porch and tower. There is a host of monuments to the Filmer family, of which the enormous engraved brass plate to Sir Edward Filmer, who died in 1629, signed by Edward Marshall, is the best. All Saints, Ulcombe is a 12th and 13th century church which was once collegiate and accordingly has a large and fine chancel. There are good medieval wall paintings and many monuments. The view over the Weald from the churchyard is very beautiful.

## **AGM AGENDA**

1. Apologies for absence.
2. To approve the Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting.
3. To receive the Chairman's Report.
4. To receive and, if thought fit, adopt the Treasurer's Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2023 and to appoint an auditor for 2024.
5. Under Rule 4 to re-elect for a further term of 3 years Mrs Sarah Bracher MBE as President and the Hon Mrs Jennifer Raikes and Mr Paul Smallwood as Vice-Presidents.

6. Under Rule 10 to re-elect the following members of the Executive Committee for a further term of 3 years:

Sir Paul Britton  
Rosemary Dymond  
Ray Hart  
Susan Hooper

Richard Latham  
The Ven Peter Lock  
Paul Wallace  
Margaret Williams

7. Under Rule 10 to elect Jonathan Carey as a member of the Executive Committee, having previously been co-opted under Rule 11.

8. Any other business notified to the Secretary in advance.

Explanatory note: summary accounts and a balance sheet for 2023 are shown on pages 4 and 5 of this report.

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Dear Friends,

Our charity celebrates its 75th birthday in 2024. Most counties now have a church trust like ours but none is as old as we are, The Friends of Kent Churches being the first county church trust, set up by a group of far-sighted enthusiasts in 1949. We intend to mark this anniversary with a service of thanksgiving at Kent's largest parish church, All Saints, Maidstone, on 21st September. All our members are welcome to attend and we hope to see a great many of you there. A letter from Paul Wallace, who is organising the service, is enclosed with this report giving further details.

Our churches and chapels have never been in greater need of financial support for repairs and facilities than they are now and therefore we intend to mark our anniversary with a fund-raising appeal. Our appeal is not, however, for gifts of cash - though any such gifts will be gratefully received and put to good use to fund our grants to churches – but rather an appeal for legacies. A letter and leaflet are enclosed with this report asking you to consider making provision for The Friends in your wills. We hope in this way to increase our funding for church repairs in the longer term.

We had a very successful programme of church visits in 2023. That our church tours evidently give pleasure to our members may not surprise you but you may be surprised to hear how delighted vicars and churchwardens generally are when asked whether The Friends can visit their church. Many congregations are intensely proud of their buildings and keen to show them to

us but it is surprising that we have little difficulty either in persuading churches to provide us with tea, even where that is an onerous task for a perhaps elderly congregation. We give each church we visit a donation of £100 and pay £5 a head for tea, from which a church can usually make a small profit. So, there is a financial incentive but this does not fully explain how welcome we are made to feel. Sometimes churches even contact us to invite us to come. The answer lies, I think, partly in the congregation's pride in their building, partly in how seriously they take the 'ministry of welcome' and partly in their regard and affection for The Friends, attributable to our support of churches and chapels in Kent over such a long period.

The four tours in 2023 were as well attended as any we have organised. The tour of Darenth Valley churches in September attracted almost 70 members, which is just about as many as we can cope with: in particular, parking can be a problem with such numbers. We have no plans at present to limit numbers but may need to consider this if our tours continue to be quite so popular. We have another full programme this year of visits to eleven churches. These are all churches which The Friends have not visited for some years; and several will be open specially for us, being otherwise kept locked and difficult to access.

Nigel Wheeler stood down as chairman of the Ride & Stride Committee during the year. It is conventional on occasions such as this to say how much the person departing will be missed but in this case it really is true! Nigel's enthusiasm and energy were a tremendous asset over the many years during which he led the Committee and the healthy state of our Ride & Stride compared with those of many other county trusts is much to his credit. We wish Nigel, who has also stood down as an *ex officio* member of the Executive Committee, well. Ride & Stride is now in the safe hands of Nigel's successor, Mary Gibbins. The other prospective change of personnel is that John Lumley has decided to retire from the Executive Committee at the AGM but will continue as chairman of the Events Committee which arranges visits and lectures. I am very grateful to him for his willingness to continue in this role.

***Paul Britton***

**THE FRIENDS OF KENT CHURCHES**  
**SUMMARISED FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR 2023**

	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
<b>INCOME FROM:</b>		
Investment Income	16,930	10,607
Donations and Grants	7,161	6,822
Legacies and Funeral Collections	80,952	142,733
Sponsored Cycle Ride & Gift Aid	138,463	129,407
Membership & Outings, Lectures	10,174	10,794
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>253,680</b>	<b>300,363</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON:</b>		
Charitable Activities		
Grants to Churches - Approved	157,500	182,000
- Lapsed/Declined	(5,241)	(35,722)
	152,259	146,278
Sponsored Cycle Ride - Distribution to Churches	56,011	54,119
John Briggs memorial lecture	-	555
Members' Outings and Lectures	2,983	2,944
Administration		
- Independent Examination	1,350	1,248
- Investment Management	3,513	3,215
- Sponsored Cycle Ride Expenses	5,367	4,853
- Other (including printing, postage, etc)	4,994	6,899
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>226,477</b>	<b>220,111</b>
Revaluation of Investments	13,312	(423)
Realised Gains/Losses on Sales of Investments	(2,279)	(66,402)
<b>NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS</b>	<b>38,236</b>	<b>13,427</b>
Total funds brought forward	594,661	581,234
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<b>632,897</b>	<b>594,661</b>

## **BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2023**

	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>		
Tangible Fixed Assets	-	-
Investments	<u>365,947</u>	<u>324,642</u>
<b>TOTAL FIXED ASSETS</b>	<u><b>365,947</b></u>	<u><b>324,642</b></u>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Loans to Churches	-	-
Other Debtors	3,628	2,790
Cash at Bank	<u>437,897</u>	<u>420,985</u>
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<u><b>441,525</b></u>	<u><b>423,775</b></u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year		
Grants approved but unpaid	172,785	152,526
Creditors	<u>1,790</u>	<u>1,230</u>
	<u><b>174,575</b></u>	<u><b>153,756</b></u>
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<u><b>632,897</b></u>	<u><b>594,661</b></u>
<b>THE FUNDS OF THE FRIENDS:</b>		
Unrestricted	<u>632,897</u>	<u>594,661</u>
	<u><b>632,897</b></u>	<u><b>594,661</b></u>

### **TRUSTEES' STATEMENT**

It is not practicable due to their length to include in this report the full accounts of The Friends of Kent Churches as required by the Charities Act 2005. We therefore present summarised accounts as permitted by the legislation. These may not contain sufficient information to allow a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity.

For further information the full annual accounts and the report of the Trustees should be consulted. Copies of these can be obtained from the Chairman.

Paul Britton  
Chairman and Trustee

## MEMBERSHIP

Membership continued to increase in 2023. At the end of the year the number of members was:

486 individuals

181 churches in the Canterbury Diocese

123 churches in the Rochester Diocese

Total: 790

We have welcomed the following the new members between publication of the Autumn newsletter and the end of December:

Lorna Bailey

Sarah Bowden

Filomena Brockwell

Adrienne Carr

Graham Clemas

Jane Copping

Fiona Egan

John Fassenfelt

Glynn Hicks

Pamela Hipkins

Julie Hussey

Geoffrey Lay

Mrs P A Marshall

Thera Meyboom

Brian Parfett

Iain Poole

Holden Rowan

Anne Smith

Malcolm Strickland

David Thornewell

Valerie Thornewell

Stuart Walter

### **The following churches joined the Friends during this period:**

St Matthew, Borstal

All Souls, Cheriton

St Martin, Cheriton

All Saints, Foots Cray

Staplehurst United Reform Church

St Mary the Virgin, Welling

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Our website was updated a few years ago, is attractive and contains a lot of information about our activities. We do less well in respect social media because we currently have no one with the technical skills to do this: our Facebook page is several years out of date. If any member knows of someone – probably a younger person - who could help us, please let Ray Hart (01959 532367 email: ray.j.hart@outlook.com) know. We would be willing to pay a reasonable fee for help.



## SPONSORED RIDE & STRIDE

### Ride & Stride 2023



We never expected 9th September 2023 to be the hottest day of the year! However, just over 700 ventured forth into the heat and participated as fundraisers for The

Friends of Kent Churches, either riding, striding or welcoming at Kent churches of all denominations. Many more were involved with supporting the event through sponsorship and local organisation - thank you to everyone.

We had a big drive at increasing publicity prior to the 2023 event with over 200 eye-catching boards and banners displayed throughout the county. A number of churches are now celebrating the event by decking the church approach or the church itself with their own personalised Ride & Stride decorations. St John the Baptist, Tunstall was one of several churches proudly displaying their own bunting and St Botolph, Northfleet had a beautiful yarn-bombed bike outside the church. The bike also had a notice encouraging sponsors and acknowledging, with appreciation, a recent grant they had received from the Friends of Kent Churches enabling them to restore their chancel.



St John, Higham



Yarn-bombed bicycle at St Botolph, Northfleet



**Sue Thomas & friends at St John, Tunstall**

Rosemary Dymond, our County Organiser, starred in a local radio interview (very early one morning) and Heather Mills led on promoting Kent Ride & Stride on various social media channels. Heather has continued posting throughout the year, increasing our social media followers. For anyone who missed Heather's daily Facebook Advent Calendar posts showing various and interesting aspects of Kent churches, it is a treat that you can still view (visit Facebook – Kentridestride).

More churches have organised groups enjoying a day out together - bell ringers, choirs, walking groups - tiny tots to older wobblers. What a great way to get to know each other better and to encourage individuals who might not venture forth alone! One congregation organised a Ride & Stride themed quiz night to raise money.

Although the numbers participating in 2023 were almost identical to 2022, we raised a whopping £15,000 more in 2023! The final figure will nudge over £139,500 but does not quite top the £140,000 raised just before the pandemic.

A trend over the past three years has been for the numbers of striders to increase whilst the rider numbers have slightly decreased. The striders in 2023 reached a record 45.5% of those out and about visiting churches. Are we getting older or are the roads more daunting? As the strider numbers have increased this year it seems fitting to focus on a trio that documented their journey for their Parish Magazine and our Facebook page.

Ray, Margaret and Peter from All Saints Foot's Cray planned their walk in advance and made an early 8am start to beat the heat. Map in hand, they set off for St John, Bexley and returned via St James, North Cray to All Saints. They enjoyed the river as well as more open countryside and shady bridle paths, meeting dog walkers and a grandfather introducing fishing to his young grandson. They then had a surprise guided tour around St James's churchyard which included a Norman gravestone before welcome refreshments back at All Saints. Just over 6 miles walking and raising £741, they wrote "What a lovely way to raise money for a good cause".



**Ray, Margaret & Peter (photographer missing!)  
of All Saints, Foot's Cray**



**Heather & Suzanne Mills of Christ  
Church, Willesborough**

## **Kent Ride & Stride 2024**

The next Ride & Stride takes place on 14th September 2024. We all hope for a fifth consecutive year of good weather, but preferably not record-breaking heat! We would like to break our fundraising records during the 75th anniversary year of The Friends of Kent Churches. Our goal is to raise at least £150,000, so encourage everyone you know to take part and make sure to sponsor a participant.

The Nightingale Trust has very kindly offered to give an extra £20 sponsorship to the first 25 riders to visit St Giles, Wormshill and Murston Old Church (restored by the Trust). Further details will be sent out in the church packs in July but you can start planning your route now to incorporate these churches in your ride/stride.

***Susan Hooper***

## GRANTS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

We were pleased to welcome a new member of our committee, Canon David Springthorpe. He comes with a wide range of ministerial experience having served in both towns and villages in Rochester Diocese.

As reported in the Autumn newsletter, grants offered to 25 churches for the year totalled £157,500. Included in this sum is £1,000 each for seven churches from the generous Charles Banks bequest. Whilst this year there were not so many churches applying for grants, there has been an increase at the end of the year, suggesting that congregations are beginning to pick up the various building projects for their churches after the slowdown caused by the pandemic.

It is also good to see that we are getting an increase in applications from the Free Churches and one also from the Pilsdon Community which uses an ancient barn, formerly the monastic chapel at the Ewel Monastery in the grounds of Malling Abbey.

Of those churches applying for grants twelve were from Canterbury diocese, ten from Rochester, two from the Free Churches and one other (Pilsdon).

Of course, there are some projects which get held up through circumstances often beyond the control of those applying for funding. I am very grateful to Mary Gibbins who follows up those parishes who have not been able to start their projects after two years and checks whether there is likely to be any progress. Sometimes this results in our committee recommending that they reapply, as the costs might have risen and indeed the project might have changed or developed. Otherwise we try and keep the grant open for them if work is about to be undertaken.

I am also grateful for the work of all the members of the committee who follow up each application and with care and a keen eye for detail visit every church to meet the people behind the projects. They then submit a written report to the committee with perceptive and helpful comments and recommendations.

Committee members: Jonathan Carey, Nick Crutchfield, Mary Gibbins, Derek Hudson, The Ven. Peter Lock, The Hon. Jennifer Raikes, Canon David Springthorpe, Deb Sutch (Secretary), Paul Wallace.

***Peter Lock***

## FRIENDS OF KENT CHURCHES GRANTS PAID IN 2023

Grants were paid to the following churches which finished their projects during the year:

Allhallows, All Saints	£1,000
Ashford, Chapel of St Francis	£500
Chatham, St Paul & All Saints	£10,000
Crayford, St Paulinus	£10,000
Eythorne, St Peter & St Paul	£500
Gillingham, St Barnabas	£3,500
Grain, St James	£12,000
Graveney, All Saints	£4,000
Greenhithe, St Mary	£22,500
Hernhill, St Michael	£1,500
Hoo , St Werbergh	£2,000
Linton, St Nicholas	£10,000
Platt, St Mary	£4,000
Sandhurst, St Nicholas	£6,000
Stalisfield, St Mary	£2,500
Staplehurst, United Reform Church	£1,500
Stone, St Mary the Virgin	£5,000
Tenterden, St Mildred	£7,000
Underriver, St Margaret	£5,000
Walmer, St Saviour	£11,000
Welling, St Mary the Virgin	£500
Westerham, St Mary	£1,000
West Malling, Pilsdon Community	£1,000
Westwell, St Mary	£5,000
Wye, St Gregory & St Martin	£5,000
Total	<u>£132,000</u>

## HOW OUR GRANTS ARE USED

The two photographs below provide a good example of how our grants can help a Kent church. St Peter & St Paul, Upper Hardres, is a beautiful medieval building on the Downs south of Canterbury which has needed to re-tile the roofs of its south aisle and south chapel. We offered a grant of £4,000 in January and the work is already largely done.



**Upper Hardres: south chapel roof being re-tiled & south aisle roof completed**

## PLANNED EVENTS IN 2024

### Visits

Three church tours are planned, all starting at 2pm. In each case timings for the rest of the tour and details of where to park will be given at the first church.

There are two ways of applying for tickets.

Please pay by bank transfer if possible, making payment to Friends of Kent Churches, CAF Bank Sort code 40-52-40, Account number 00022279 and let Jill Rutland know ([jill.rutland@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jill.rutland@hotmail.co.uk) /01732 843248) which visits you are paying for so you can be added to the list. If paying by bank transfer please use the word 'Events' as a reference.

If you need to pay by cheque, please use the enclosed application form which is also available on the website. A written confirmation will be given if you include a stamped addressed envelope, otherwise acknowledgement will be by email or telephone.

**Wednesday 12 June:** a visit to churches north-west of West Malling arranged by John Lumley tel 01233 756249. Tea will be provided at Addington.

We meet at St Peter & St Paul, Trottiscliffe ME19 5EE at 2pm. The church is part of an exquisitely pretty group, which also includes Court Lodge and a row of cottages, away from the village and beneath the scarp of the North Downs. It is small, 12th century building with a Perpendicular tower. The interior is crowded with 18th century furniture, much of it from Westminster Abbey, including a magnificent pulpit. Please park in Church Lane.

St Martin, Ryarsh ME19 5LB is again away from its village and surrounded by fields. From the south it looks a pretty, Perpendicular building: tower, south aisle and porch. But, as so often in Kent, this masks an older structure, partly early Norman and partly 14th century. There is a Norman piscina – a great rarity; a Jacobean pulpit and good glass by Clayton and Bell.

St Margaret, Addington ME19 5BQ stands amongst trees on a large mound, this time close to the village. The body of the church is early Norman but the tower, very similar to that at Ryarsh, is of the 15th century and the south chapel is dated 1463. It contains a spectacular wall monument by sculptor Joshua Marshall from the 1650s. The church has a fine array of brasses and good Victorian glass.

**Wednesday 17 July:** a visit to three churches east of Faversham arranged by Amicia Oldfield tel 01795 886155/07791 183067. Tea will be provided at Hernhill.

We meet at 2pm at All Saints, Graveney ME13 9DU which is one of the most atmospheric churches in Kent because it is unrestored and has a beautiful interior still largely in its Georgian state. There is Norman evidence in the chancel but otherwise the church was mostly rebuilt in the 14th century. Font, screens, pews, brasses and some glass are all late medieval and there is a fine 17th century pulpit. The textures at this church are a delight. Parking is on the lane passing the church.

St Peter & St Paul, Boughton-under-Blean ME13 9NB. A 13th century church with later accretions, beautifully sited on a hillock. The chancel, chapels and nave arcades are all a grand rebuilding of the late 13th century. The nave aisles and the tower are Perpendicular. The church has a 16th century rood screen and some good monuments, including one signed by the peerless Epiphanius Evesham.

St Michael, Hernhill ME13 9JU struggles to compete with our first two churches but is nicely situated south of a pretty village green. It is a complete late medieval rebuilding, with chancel and chapel, aisled nave and tower. Again, the rood screen survives and there is an interesting array of 18th and 19th century glass, including some painted by the wife of an 1830s vicar.

**Wednesday 18 September:** a visit to churches south of Tenterden organised by Simon Evans tel 01580 891245/ 07710 553038. Tea will be provided at Rolvenden.

We meet at 2pm at St Mary, Northiam TN31 6NN which, please note, is in Sussex. This is a grand church, thanks to the addition of a large, aisled chancel and the equally large Frewen Mausoleum in the 1840s. The nave and tower to which these are attached are partly Norman and partly 13th century. There are good fittings, glass and monuments. Parking is on the village streets.

St Peter, Newenden TN18 5PN, back in Kent, is an odd little building, much reduced in size by demolitions in 1700. It has some good fittings and glass, especially a spectacular late-Norman font.

St Mary the Virgin, Rolvenden TN17 4LS is a fine, large church mostly of the 14th century with a lofty interior. The east end was rebuilt in the 15th century. There are good monuments and fittings, including the elevated private pew of the Gybbon-Moneypenny family which is a remarkable sight.

## **Briggs Events**

The Briggs Event is sponsored each year by the Friends to help the host church raise funds. The event may be a lecture, concert or a similar event. The Friends contribute up to £500 to the cost of a lecturer or performer and other associated costs of staging the event. No church wished to hold an event last year but in 2024 there are two, both organ recitals. That at St Mary, Platt will take place at 6pm on Saturday 11th May and will be given by David Poulter, formerly Director of Music at Coventry, Chester and Liverpool Cathedrals. A flyer for this recital accompanies this annual report. The second will be given at 4.30pm on Saturday 13th July by Francesca Massey, former Director of Music at Rochester Cathedral, at St Giles, Shipbourne; tickets can be purchased at the door.

If any church has proposals for an event in 2025, please contact Paul Britton (01732 365794; email pauljbritton@live.co.uk).

## **Future Events**

There will be an autumn lecture at Lenham on 17 October given by Cameron Newham, church historian and photographer, who will speak about his wonderful project to make a photographic record of all the rural parish churches of England. Needless to say, it will be copiously illustrated. Many of you may know of the outstanding quality of Cameron Newham's photographs from his recently published book 'Country Church Monuments'.



## ACTIVITIES DURING THE LAST YEAR

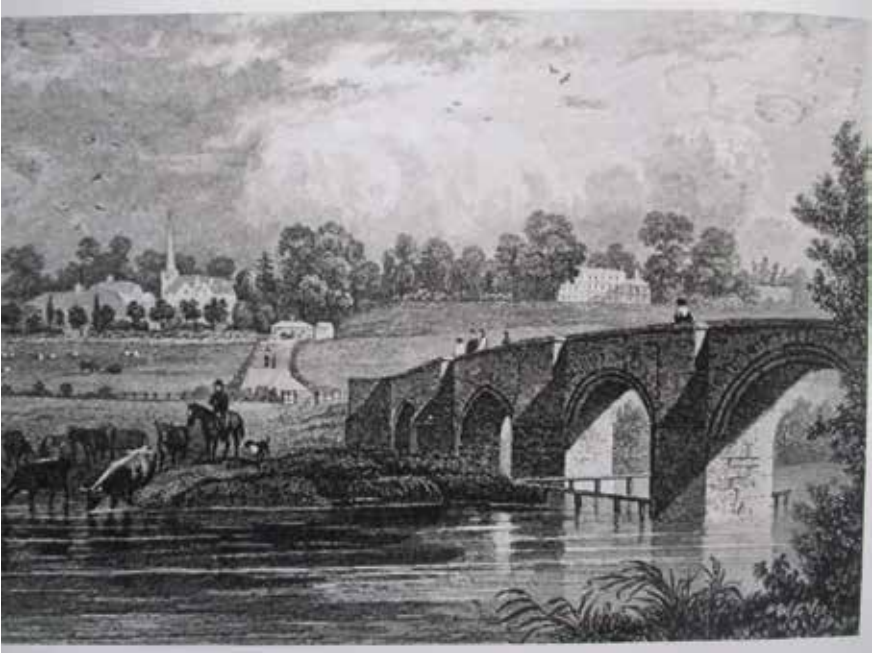
In May we held the AGM at Barham and also visited Kingston church. In June we visited Sheppey at the third attempt to see Queenborough, Minster and the newly restored Dockyard Church at Sheerness (the photograph below shows Amicia Oldfield talking to members about this church). In July we visited three churches in the south of the county – High Halden, Woodchurch and Appledore; and in September three more near Sevenoaks – Shoreham, Lullingstone and Eynsford.



Our autumn lecture was given by Professor Paul Bennett, formerly Director of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust, who explored *The Saxon Churches of Canterbury*, not just those of which there are substantial standing remains – St Martin, St Pancras, St Augustine and St Mildred – but also others which are known only from documentary sources.

### **JAMES RAMSAY, CHARLES MIDDLETON AND WILLIAM WILBERFORCE AT TESTON**

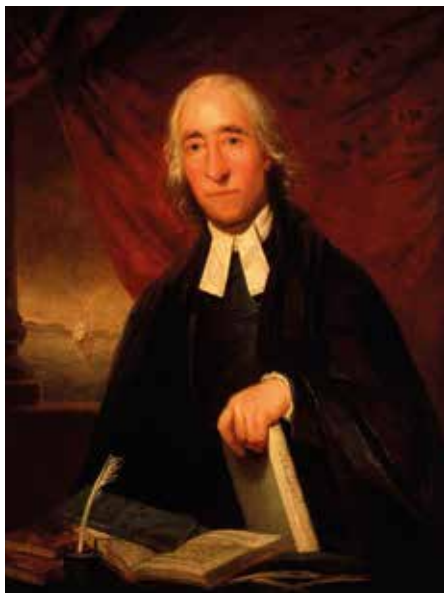
Nowadays the anti-slavery movement is often in the news, perhaps people are not-so-often aware that a small village and its church and manor house just west of Maidstone paid an important part in the abolition of slavery in this country. That village is Teston, set high above the River Medway, and 250 years ago the vicar of St Peter and St Paul was James Ramsay and the squire at Barham Court, next to the church, was Charles Middleton.



**Teston church and Barham Court from an early 19thC print**

James Ramsay, 1733-1789, was born in Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire, and having studied to be a surgeon in London, at the age of 24 he was sent to be ship's surgeon on HMS Arundel in the West Indies. Shortly afterwards, Charles Middleton, 1726-1813, was appointed captain of the Arundel and they became firm friends.

In the same year the Arundel was in contact with a slave ship, the Swift, and Ramsay as surgeon witnessed horrifying scenes which affected him for the rest of his life. About this time, he fell and broke his femur which meant he was no longer fit to serve in the navy. After a spell in hospital, he returned to England and trained as a priest. In 1762 he became vicar of two churches on St Kitts in the Caribbean which was then part of the diocese of London. He married Rebecca Akers, whose father was a sugar planter on St Kitts, though the family came from Yalding, a few miles from Teston, where there are memorials to them in the church. During his 15 years in St Kitts, he became familiar with the conditions of the slaves in the plantations and of course by marriage he was connected with the planters. Because of his concern for the slaves, he became unpopular with some of the planters.



**James Ramsay**



**Charles Middleton**

Meanwhile, Ramsay's ex-captain and friend, Charles Middleton had married Margaret Gambier who had a great friend, Mrs Bouverie, the owner of Barham Court in Teston. When Charles retired from active service, Mrs Bouverie invited the Middletons to come and live with her, and in 1781 Charles arranged for James to have the living of Teston-with-Nettlestead, and Ramsay was vicar there until his early death in 1789 at the age of 56. He was also Charles' private secretary. Middleton was Comptroller of the Navy, was made a baronet, and was elected MP for Rochester. He subsequently became Lord Barham of Barham Court and was First Lord of the Admiralty and the man who created the fleets which were to defeat Napoleonic France at sea. He and his wife had a wide circle of influential friends and many visitors came to Barham Court. Among them were evangelical Christians interested in the abolition of the slave trade and people like Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr Johnson, James Boswell, David Garrick, Hannah More, John Newton, The Bishop of London and Thomas Clarkson. These became known as the Testonites. (Teston, by the way, is pronounced Teeson as in a cup of tea.)

Ramsay was often at Barham Court to tell them about his experiences on St Kitts and his first-hand knowledge of life in the plantations and with the planters. He also wrote several pamphlets on the subject. The Middletons' daughter was married to a great friend of the MP for Hull, William Wilberforce, and through his son-in-law Charles persuaded Wilberforce to take up in Parliament the abolition of slavery cause. Wilberforce gained much information to help the cause from his contact with Ramsay at Teston.

Later on, William Wilberforce and his wife spent time at another vicarage just across the Medway from Teston. His son Robert was vicar of St Mary, East Farleigh and Charles Middleton's grandson visited him there. Many Wilberforces, including William's wife Barbara, are buried at East Farleigh, though the great man himself lies in Westminster Abbey.



Sadly, James Ramsay did not live to see the end of slavery. The Bill was not passed until 1807. He died in his friend Lord Barham's London house in 1789 and is buried at Teston where his citation says that 'his Unaffected zeal for the Public Good, Steady contempt of Self Interest, Tender attention to each Social Duty, Benevolence to the Whole human race, and humble Piety to God are held in estimation.....'

**Jennifer Raikes**

## KENT'S EARLIEST GRAVEYARD MONUMENTS

There are very few stone monuments from the medieval period surviving in our churchyards and there can never have been a great many. The grandest examples are the decorated Celtic stone crosses of northern England and the rather plainer ones of Cornwall. Kent has a remarkable but little-recognised group of gravestones, albeit on a smaller scale than those just mentioned.

So-called 'discoïd grave markers' like the ones illustrated below, were used to mark graves in churchyards in parts, at least, of the county. They were first recognised by Ben Stocker in the 1980s. They usually consist of a simple stone disc with an incised cross on both sides, on a stem, the total height being about 75cms. The crosses vary considerably in design. Stocker identified 66 surviving examples in the south-east of the county, of which 12 were still in situ in churchyards, while the rest had been taken inside to protect them, used as building materials or were just lying around in churchyards. Since he wrote, further examples have come to light, including a beautiful example at Lamberhurst which has a Greek cross with flourished arms on the disc.



Grave markers at Hythe (left) and Lymgne (right) churches



It is impossible to date these headstones precisely since they have no inscriptions but they seem likely to be of the 12th or early 13th centuries (the more elaborate ones are probably later). Nor can we know how typical they were though it is likely that at this early date most grave markers would have been of wood.

*Paul Britton*

## **PATRONS**

The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury  
The Bishop of Rochester  
The Lord Lieutenant of Kent  
The Lady Kingsdown  
The Right Reverend Michael Turnbull CBE DL

## **PRESIDENT**

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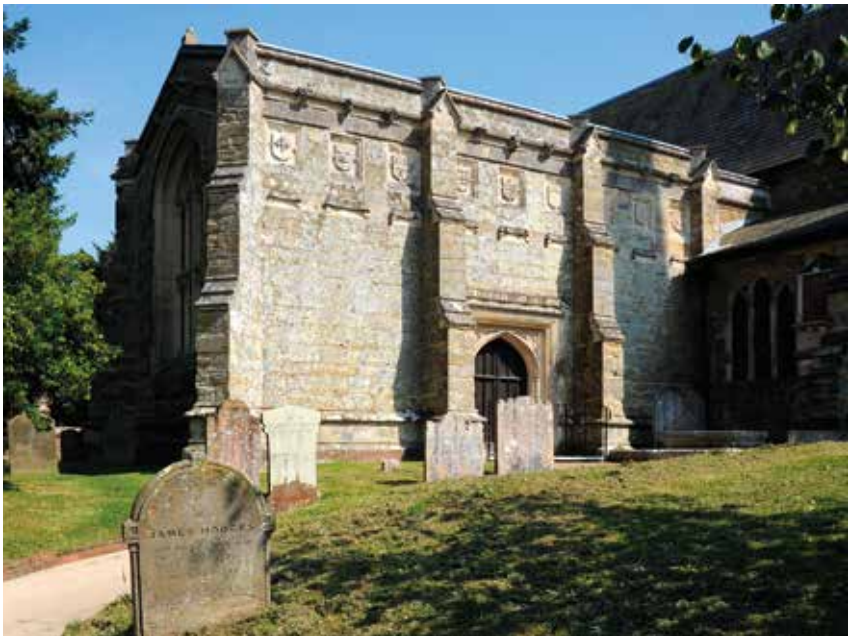
**Subscriptions for 2023 are now due. Unless paid by Standing Order, they should please be sent to the Membership Secretary, Liz Betts, 3 Estate Yard Cottage, Broomfield, Maidstone ME17 1PP (lizbetts@btinternet.com) before the end of May.**

Subscription rates are: £10 for individuals/£15 for two at same address; £200 for life members; at least £10 for Church and Historical Society Members.

**Registered Charity No: 207021**



**All Saints, Graveney**



**St Mary, Northiam: Frewen Mausoleum**



St Margaret, Addington: William & Elizabeth Watton