

Parish Profile

Laughton, Ripe and Chalvington



SUMMARY

The recently combined Parish of Laughton, Ripe and Chalvington, lies in an exceptional part of East Sussex blessed by some of the longest hours of sunshine in the UK. The Rectory is modern and easy to run, close to key village amenities. We are a thriving and diverse rural community. The churches support regular services each week and are financially and structurally sound. The opportunity for the new Rector is to lead the congregation fully into the 21st Century in a way that deepens the relevance of the church to the community and to grow the congregation.

We are looking for a priest who can build on our strong foundation of centuries of Christian Worship in these villages.

Someone who:

- will relish the variety that this community has to offer
- will become an engaging spiritual and community leader amongst us
- will be able to balance the needs of the older congregation while enthusiastically and innovatively reaching out to families and young people.

Introduction from the Bishop of Chichester

Proclaiming the Mystery of Faith

In 2025 this diocese celebrates the 950th anniversary of witness and evangelisation from a mission base in Chichester, building on the earlier mission founded by St Wilfrid at Selsey. 2025 also marks the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea with its reminder of the formative claim upon us of the catholic creeds.

These anniversaries are more than historical footnotes. They speak powerfully about the richness of faith and mission that is our inheritance locally and universally.

Inspired by that inheritance, we seek to be a household of faith that is endlessly curious about how the Holy Scriptures and the sacraments of the New Covenant enable us to know, love and follow Jesus Christ in today's noisy and distracted world.

If God is calling you to join us in the task of proclaiming the mystery of faith in some part of this diocese, we pray that the contribution of your gifts and experience will enrich our witness and deepen your own discipleship.

We take very seriously the call to diversity and radical inclusion as characteristic of the Church's mission. For this reason we welcome applications from ordained women and Global Majority Heritage clergy, who are under-represented in those who serve this diocese.

+Martin

INTRODUCTION

The Parish of Laughton, Ripe and Chalvington, lies between Lewes, the county town of East Sussex and Hailsham.

There is a population of approximately 1,500 people of all ages who come from differing walks of life - professionals, rural entrepreneurs, artists, academics, farmers, London commuters, the retired and young business people who work from home.

The Arts are strongly represented:

- We are close to Glyndebourne
- The Charleston Literary Festival, part of the broader Brighton Arts festival
- Love Supreme Festival
- Lewes Speakers Festival
- Villages Music Festival.

Activities and entertainments include:

- Village cricket
- Car boot sales
- Country fairs
- 2 cinemas which lie within 15 minutes' drive
- East Sussex National Golf Resort
- Drusillas Zoo
- East Sussex Gliding Club at Ringmer
- Knockhatch Adventure Park
- Deanland Airfield
- Ploughing matches.

We enjoy the music that enhances our worship and are keen that this should continue, develop and evolve to be as inclusive as possible. There is a biennial Villages Music Festival that raises funds for all three churches and other village enterprises.

Combining the Parishes is proving to be administratively easier and certainly makes life more straightforward for the incumbent. Services are regularly held at each of the three churches and Deanland Wood Park. The character and in some cases the style of the services varies depending on location and we would like to preserve this diversity. That said, in the last five years we have lost several key members of our congregation and do not want simply to 'manage decline' We are open to leadership and constructive changes that make growth more likely.

With encouragement from the Archdeacon, we are strengthening our administrative capabilities with the help of an energetic and resourceful part time administrator who started in June 2023. She is proving to be an excellent fit for the role and is coming up to speed with efficacy and enthusiasm. By the time our new Rector is in position we anticipate that his or her administrative overhead will be considerably lightened.

Maintaining the fabric of three medieval churches is always demanding, but this has been well done in recent years. Finances are sound and the parish contributions are paid in full. A major project of building the toilet and kitchen area at Laughton has now been completed. Plans are afoot for a similar project at Ripe. (<https://www.lrcchurches.co.uk/welcome.htm>)



All Saints Laughton new facilities

SECTION 1

The Broader Context

Our vision for the parish is for the church to be seen and felt at the heart of village life and to bless each village with the love of God.

We express this through our hospitality, through our worship, and through a commitment to seeking the kingdom of God in a way that brings meaning and hope to life. We aim to 'meet people where they are' and to be a source of refreshment and comfort to all.

The benefice is within the Diocese of Chichester, the Archdeaconry of Brighton and Lewes and the Deanery of Lewes and Seaford. Archdeacon Martin and the

Rural Dean are super supportive. Bishop Martin and his team are working hard to include and reach out to East Sussex. The hub of the Diocese is based so far west that at times we can feel a little detached. A cathedral hosted event took place this summer near Ringmer, to enhance the local sense of belonging and inform us of the work and aims of the Chichester Diocese.

House Groups

Successful Alpha courses have been run in the past and we would welcome doing so again. At present we have one active house group. Lent courses take place each year. A course member says: *'We enjoy meeting together to study the Bible and discuss how we live out our faith in everyday life'*.

Previous Lenten talks by an Archdeacon were very well received. There is a core of church attenders who are keen to explore the Christian theology to satisfy their intellectual and spiritual curiosity and to understand and debate difficult issues that arise within the Christian faith.

Schools

We are always looking for ways to reach young people and nurture their spiritual growth. At present the Ripe Nursery school plays a central role in services such as Mothering Sunday and Harvest Festival; the children feel at home in the churches of both Chalvington and Ripe.



Kate Fleming, Principal - Ripe Nursery School

"The link between the Nursery and the Church whilst "informal" has been a very special one. We are always delighted to be invited to take part in services, such as Mothering Sunday and Harvest Festival, where the children usually prepare a song or two to add to the service. The Harvest lunch has been attended by Nursery families, who have felt really welcomed to the community at these events. A

Nursery highlight is always the Nativity which is performed in the Church with families welcomed by the Rector. Previous Rectors have even joined in celebrations for 'World Book Day'! The link between the Nursery and the Church is one that is highly valued by staff and families and really roots the `nursery in its community'; we look forward to this continuing with the new Rector."

Links with Laughton Primary School

In late January 2023, pupils, parents, and staff from Laughton Community Primary School came together to plant trees on the Laughton Glebe field. The tree planting, supported by others in the local community, followed a successful ceremony in December where the Lord-Lieutenant of East Sussex and the Bishop of Chichester planted the first trees. The community will plant around 350 trees in total to commemorate The Queen's reign.

A portion of the Glebe has been handed over for public access and is being enjoyed by pupils from the school who helped choose which trees would be planted. The children each put a wish written on a piece of paper next to the roots of the tree they planted. The pupils will return as part of their forest school sessions as well as being able to visit and watch the trees grow for years to come.

Worship

There are different styles of worship in the parish. Ripe and Chalvington currently enjoy a traditional form. At present, Laughton and Deanland offer a more informal approach.

We appreciate the different styles of worship- Liturgy matters but we want to find fresh expression of it for those without a Church tradition.



An important component of our community is Deanland Wood Park (<https://www.deanlandwoodpark.co.uk/>), which consists principally of retired people, numbering just over 600 residents. Some attend the parish church services. In the last few years we have been holding 5th Sunday services at Deanland. There has been a sizeable and enthusiastic attendance of up to 20.

We have been delighted to host 5 weddings in the past year. There are approximately 8-10 funerals or burials of ashes each year and now an increase in

the number of baptisms. We like to offer stand-alone Baptism services and are pleased to report that three children have been christened this June already. Our two previous Rectors, encouraged these to be part of Parish Communion. There are four churchwardens for the three churches, and one PCC, which meets five times a year. There are 121 names on the parish electoral roll (as of 2021).

Each service has a rota of Sidesmen, Readers, Chalice assistants, and Leaders of the Intercessions. So far, the slots are filled without difficulty. Church cleaners and flower arrangers are thanked with an annual lunch. We have been fortunate in having a lay benefice coordinator who has set up many of the existing ways of running the churches. She is now doing less herself but remains most helpful. Despite our small numbers and rural setting, we feel there is energy and appetite in the villages for spiritual nourishment. Attracted by idyllic surroundings, young families have recently moved here. Nine new houses have been built in Ripe with a few more to come and with Ripe and Chalvington Community Association's (R.A.C.C.A- 220 members) willingness to promote church initiatives and news we see this interregnum as an opportunity to refresh both our mission and our centrality and relevance to village people.

We are conscious that things have remained competent but static in recent years, some covid related, some not - and are keen to change direction.

SECTION 2

The Priest We Need - Key Attributes:

- 1. A natural Christian leader with a friendly outgoing personality who relates both to the religious and secular community whilst gently encouraging followership of Jesus.*
- 2. A person with vision, who can balance the needs of the traditional worshippers and those who prefer a more informal style; someone prepared to make the changes required so that we appeal to the younger generation.*
- 3. A priest willing to be widely known and visible in the villages.*
- 4. Someone with empathy and pastoral gifts to help those in emotional and spiritual need.*
- 5. A priest who wants to live among us; build a life with us and help us to keep our churches alive both spiritually and materially.*

SECTION 3

About the Parish

The setting of the villages that comprise this Parish is beautifully placed as it is between working farms of the Weald and the ever-present drama of the South Downs. We are nevertheless 15 minutes from the bustling County town of Lewes, in easy reach of Eastbourne and the City of Brighton, with its cosmopolitan atmosphere and two universities. Public footpaths crisscross both ancient woodland and open fields, joining the villages. Due to the flat nature of the lanes, we have become a popular cycling destination.

We have three medieval churches in the villages, each with its own character. They are much loved, even by those who seldom, if ever, attend services. Young people are moving into the villages who work from home and want a pleasant place in which to raise their families. Fast broadband is key to this development.

Amenities

There are busy Village Halls in Laughton and Ripe, as well as a social centre at Deanland, which provide venues for church and other social activities. They are well maintained by enthusiastic committees. There are thriving community run village shops with post offices in both Laughton and Ripe. Historically Ripe and Chalvington PCC sponsored the café within the shop, with the aim of providing support and a listening ear, promoting a sense of cohesion and outreach to villagers, school parents, walkers, cyclists, and passers-by. This has been an enormously successful enterprise.

There are two lively pubs:

- The Yew Tree at Chalvington <https://www.yewtreechalvington.com/> is the site of the oldest cricket ground in England. Village teams still play here, and the grounds host the popular summer flower show.
- The Roebuck Inn <https://theroebuckinnfreehouse.com/> at Laughton is in new ownership with good food and a programme of events.

There is an established project within Laughton, which is the conversion of a former hospital into privately owned homes where the community live cooperatively by jointly managing the land and amenities (www.laughtonlodge.org.uk).

Schools

Serving the entire community, Laughton CP School is OFSTED rated 'Good'. The private nursery school in Ripe has been awarded 'Outstanding'. Ripe Nursery uses Laughton Village Hall for the youngest children. It holds a baby and toddler group weekly.

The nearest secondary school to Laughton Rectory is King's Academy, Ringmer (rated Good) and only 3.7 miles away. Buses are available.

Health Provision

There are doctor's surgeries at Ringmer, Lewes, Hailsham, Alfriston, East Hoathly and Horam. Hospital provision is at Eastbourne, Brighton, and Haywards Heath, with minor injury units at Lewes and Uckfield. There are no nursing or residential care homes in our benefice.

The Rectory

Built in 1989 this is an attractive, easy to run, detached brick house half tile hung in the Sussex tradition. Reached via a quiet village lane with south facing, far reaching views to the Downs it adjoins All Saints churchyard, Laughton.



Accommodation:

- Ground Floor: Hall, sitting room, dining room, study, kitchen, cloakroom, utility room with lobby leading to garage.
- First Floor: Four bedrooms, family bathroom and separate wc.
- Outside: Manageable garden adjacent to the Glebe field with views towards the South Downs, single garage plus space to park four cars.

Church Buildings

All Saints at Laughton, St John the Baptist at Ripe and St Bartholomew at Chalvington are all Grade I, 13th Century and of architectural interest.

We like to keep all 3 churches open daily. The buildings themselves and the churchyards are well maintained. A warm welcome, including heating of the buildings, continues to be a priority and we like to offer refreshments after all mid-morning services. QR code giving has been introduced lately.

Laughton Church

Laughton is the biggest church and seats 250 people. Underneath the chancel is a crypt that houses the remains of two Prime Ministers from the 18th century, amongst other remains, including those of the Earls of Chichester. The church is a good venue for concerts especially since the addition of a kitchen and toilet.



All Saints, Laughton

Ripe Church

Set centrally in Ripe, St. John the Baptist's plain glass in the nave windows make it an exceptionally light building and claims some very ancient stained glass in the east window. Music is enhanced here by an exceptionally good acoustic. The paddock next to the churchyard was donated to both the church and the village hall for parking. The Nursery use it for recreation.



St John the Baptist, Ripe

The Village Hall sits beside the churchyard and is independently run as a charity. We can use the toilets and kitchen facilities, and it is hired for social events and meetings.

The church is used for concerts, choral workshops and recitals and the building is used during the Villages Music Festival. An audio system has been installed.



Bell Ringing and Choir

Ripe and Laughton have sets of bells, which are rung occasionally by a team of dedicated ringers. There is no longer a regular church choir; a small number of singers lead hymns and a simple sung setting of the Mass. A full choir is organised for special occasions, such as Carols by Candlelight and a service of contemplation on Good Friday. There are

occasional visiting choirs. An organist is generally available.

Chalvington Church

Chalvington Church is a great favourite. A delightful small Saxon church with a shingle steeple roof. It is set in fields with a view to the Downs, a place for quiet contemplation and ideal for intimate services. It seats about 50 people. The Chalvington Parish School Site Foundation offers annual grants for educational purposes, particularly for children and young adults



St Bartholomew, Chalvington

Worship

There are regular services as follows, (but with seasonal variations):

Weekly services:

- 8.30am Holy Communion BCP (alternating between Laughton, Ripe & Chalvington).

Monthly services at 10.30am:

- 1st Sunday Morning Prayer BCP at Chalvington with occasional choir
- 2nd Sunday Parish Communion CW at Laughton with occasional choir
- 3rd Sunday Parish Communion CW at Ripe
- 4th Sunday Parish Communion CW at Laughton
- 5th Sunday Holy Communion CW or Service of Praise at Deanland
- 2nd Thursday of every month: Fellowship at Deanland (during interregnum).

Additional notes:

- Refreshments are served after each service
- There are no Readers in the Parish
- There are Chalice assistants for 10.30 Holy Communion services

- There is a rota of Sidesmen
- Bible readers and intercessions are lay led at all 10.30 services
- Baptisms are offered as a stand-alone service
- Confirmations are held regularly within the Deanery.

Parish Magazine

We no longer have a Parish Magazine delivered door to door but in recent years an Online publication, 'The Bugle' reports weekly on news items and events of interest to the villages, including church activities and notices. The Combined Parish website currently needs redesigning. Our new part-time Parish Administrator has agreed to take this on.

Fundraising for Charity

Historically donations have been made to local Hospices, the Leprosy Mission, the Eastbourne KPG project, the Poppy Day Appeal, the Lifeboat Association, Trussell Trust, local food banks and The Samaritans.

The Villages Music Festival

The festival was started in 2012 with the goal of celebrating music and the arts of all genres. Our aim was to join the communities together, to open the doors for others to visit the Benefice, and to raise funds for community arts projects, the schools, village halls and churches. It runs biennially in early July and has achieved its aims, with generous donations made to local causes. The programme this summer attracted more people than ever. Dame Felicity Lott is now Patron of this registered charity.

Some village activities:

- Laughton Steam and Country Fair
- Ripe & Chalvington Flower Show (spring & summer)
- Yoga, Laughton
- Deanland Bowls Club
- Laughton Cricket Club
- Parish Councils monthly Meetings for Laughton and also Chalvington with Ripe
- Weekly pop-up pub (Ripe Village Stores) with occasional pop-up supper
- Father Christmas at Ripe on Christmas Eve and Childrens' Church Gift Service
- Laughton Christmas celebrations, including Lights on the Green
- Annual Village Hall quiz
- Laughton Village Choir (meets weekly)

- Carols by candlelight, Ripe or Laughton Church
- 'Gill's Yew Tree Companionship Lunch
- Carriage Driving for the disabled
- RACCA weekly running club
- RACCA dog group walks
- Table tennis at Ripe.



Part of a Baptism service April 2023



St John the Baptist, Ripe congregation



Tree planting at Laughton with Bishop Martin, the Lord Lieutenant and school children