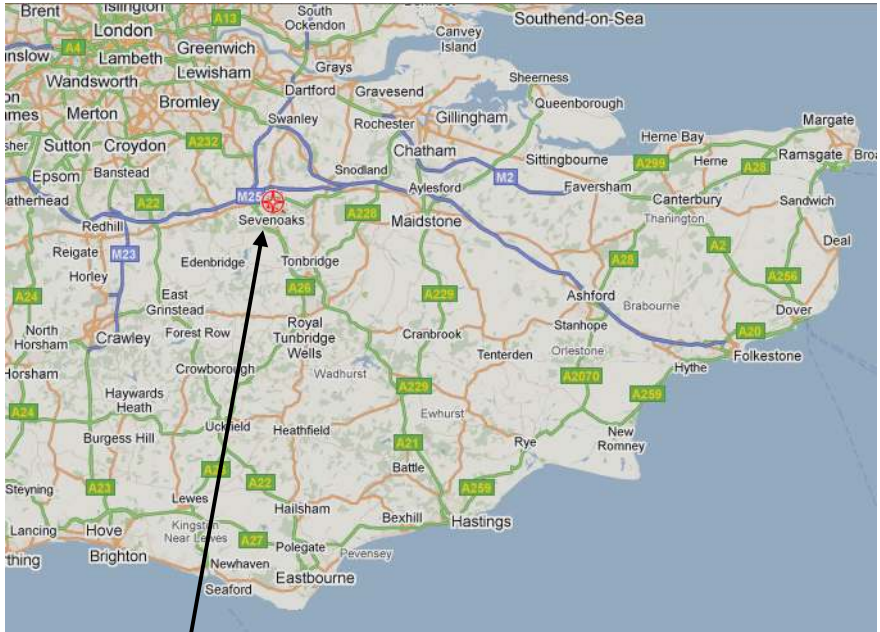


St. John the Baptist



Sevenoaks



Sevenoaks



The Town

Sevenoaks is a pleasant market town in a rural setting on the southern edge of the North Downs enjoying easy access to the Kentish countryside, to the coast and to London. Charing Cross and the City are just over 30 minutes away by train, and the M25 and motorway system only 5 minutes away by car.

The historic centre of the town contains some fine old architecture, while the Vine cricket ground towards the northern end is one of the oldest in England. Knole House, one of England's largest National Trust properties, and its extensive deer park are immediately adjacent to the town centre and provide plenty of opportunities for walking. The town offers a good range of recreational and cultural facilities, including a well-appointed leisure centre and a popular cinema and theatre complex. There is a thriving Summer Festival of arts and music and a Literary Festival in the autumn. The shops in the town centre and the supermarkets on the outskirts provide a wide range of goods and services.

The small district hospital specialises in rehabilitation for patients recovering from illness or injury and provides an outpatient clinic and a minor injuries unit. There is sheltered housing provision for the elderly and several nursing homes. There is a good selection of state and independent schools in Sevenoaks and the surrounding area. (Further details in *Appendix I*).

The population of the town (currently some 18,500) is highly diverse: an extremely affluent few, a comfortably-off great majority, and a small but significant minority who are socially or economically deprived. Many residents work locally in the service sector or in light industry, but a significant number commute to London or to larger towns nearby.

The Parish

The parish, one of five within the town, lies in northern Sevenoaks. Much of this part of the town was developed in the 19th century to cater for the needs of industry and the coming of the railway and, though the economic and social composition of the parish is now very mixed, it still contains areas of relative deprivation. Housing is varied, ranging from Victorian houses and cottages to modern developments and from estates of social housing to some properties at the luxury end of the market.

There are local shops on St John's Hill and further north in the Greatness area. Sevenoaks town centre is about three quarters of a mile from the church. Sevenoaks Hospital lies within the parish. The Vicar of St John's used to be the Hospital Chaplain and, although this arrangement has been discontinued by the hospital, the last Vicar was a regular visitor. There are two nursing homes and one residential home in the parish. In addition to the Church School (which is discussed later) there are three schools in the parish, two of which regularly use the church for their carol services.



The Church of St. John the Baptist

THE CHURCH BUILDING: The Church of St. John the Baptist was founded as a chapel of Sevenoaks parish (St. Nicholas) in 1858. St. John's became a separate ecclesiastical parish in 1878. In 1913 the patronage was sold to the Guild of All Souls, who have since remained the patrons.



Patronal Festival

The original building, constructed of Kentish ragstone, was extended in brick to form a new east end in the first decade of the twentieth century. In the mid-sixties the interior was re-ordered. The High Altar was removed from the east wall and is now set upon steps at the western end of the chancel under a baldacchino. A large rood, depicting Christ reigning from the cross, marks the entrance to the chancel. On the south side of this entrance is the shrine of our Lady and on the north side the shrine of St. John the Baptist.

The Lady Chapel is situated in the south chancel aisle. The north aisle contains the All Souls altar and the altar of Our Lady of Walsingham. The church is in a good structural and decorative state and several additions have been made in recent years, including a set of five stained glass windows by Caroline Benyon.

The pipe organ is a two-manual Foster and Andrews instrument renovated in the 1960s and thoroughly overhauled, cleaned and re-voiced in 2001. It is well maintained.

OTHER PROPERTIES:

THE VICARAGE: The present vicarage was built in 1968 and is situated adjacent to the church. It comprises: 5 bedrooms, toilet and bathroom upstairs and dining room, sitting room, kitchen, utility room, study and toilet downstairs. There is a garage and a large well laid-out garden.



The Vicarage and Parish Office

THE PARISH OFFICE: Though this shares an entrance with the Vicarage, it is separate from the Vicar's accommodation and consists of an office, a small sitting room and a toilet/storeroom.

THE CURATE'S HOUSE: (14, Quaker's Hall Lane) A three-bedroom semi-detached house dating from the early nineteen hundreds, it is situated some 150 metres from the church and vicarage. It comprises: 3 bed-

rooms, study, bathroom and toilet upstairs with lounge, dining room, kitchen and toilet downstairs. It has a large garden.

THE CHURCH HALL: The church hall was built in 1910. It is in a good structural state, though requiring some minor repairs. The hall is used by a variety of community groups as well as by the congregation.

THE CHURCH GROUNDS: The grounds around the church are kept in good order by members of the congregation. They include a garden of remembrance abutting the south wall of the nave.

WORSHIP:

The Mass is at the centre of the Parish's life.

Sunday: Said Mass 8 am *
Sung Mass 10 am

Weekdays: Said Mass 9.30 am (Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri, Sat)
Said Mass 7 pm (Wed)

Festivals falling on a weekday: Sung Mass 8 pm

Morning and Evening Prayer: Said daily *

Vespers with Reflective address: on Sundays during Advent and Lent

The Sunday School meets in the church hall at 10 am during the first part of Mass. The children then come into church in time for the offertory.

Collective worship for St. John's School takes place weekly in the church during term time.

Mass of the Society of Our Lady of Walsingham: monthly on a week-day evening, open to all-comers.

Stations of the Cross: Wednesday evenings and Friday mornings in Lent.

The church is open on Monday mornings and Friday afternoons for prayer when the **Blessed Sacrament** is exposed.

The Rosary is said monthly and weekly in May and October.

In 2010 there were 28 **baptisms**, 4 **weddings** and 22 **funerals**. **Baptisms**, other than in special circumstances, take place in the Parish Mass.

There is an annual **Confirmation**.

Services are conducted by our Readers **in old peoples' residential and nursing homes** and **communion** taken to the **housebound** at other times.

Confession times are published during Lent and Advent and arranged by appointment at other times.

All services are Common Worship, with the exception of Morning and Evening Prayer (Roman Breviary). Those marked * are suspended during the interregnum.



Palm Sunday Procession

THE CHOIR:

The church has a strong and long-established musical and choral tradition. The parish is greatly appreciative of the dedication and professionalism of its organist and choirmaster. Children in the choir progress through the Royal School of Church Music tests. The choir is able to offer a communion motet for every sung service and a full Nine Lessons and Carols at Christmas. The adult contingent are loyal, committed church members and able musicians. For many years settings of the Mass by such composers as Haydn, Mozart, Schubert and others have been used for the church's Patronal Festival. St. John's is very fortunate in being able to call upon further singers at these times to augment the regular choir and upon a number of instrumentalists to provide orchestral accompaniment.



St. John's Choir

CONGREGATION: St. John's is the Parish Church for the northern part of Sevenoaks. However, with its emphasis on liturgical worship and its longstanding commitment to the Anglo-Catholic tradition, it also attracts people from further afield. At least half of its active congregation lives beyond the parish boundaries. There are currently 229 on the electoral roll, though this does include those who left with the last Vicar to

join the Roman Catholic Ordinariate in March 2011. Since then the normal Sunday congregation has been around 80 and more than 100 attend Mass at least once a month. The congregation is economically and socially very diverse. The numerical balance between women and men is much nearer to equal than in many parishes. There is a wide age span, including a good number of children, though the middle-aged and elderly predominate and one of the challenges for the future will be drawing in more younger adults.

Members of the congregation have a range of views on women priests and bishops, but there is broad support for the idea that St John's should continue to provide a home for adherents of the Anglo-Catholic tradition who cannot in conscience accept women priests and bishops. Following the Priests (Ordination of Women) measure in 1992 the PCC passed Resolutions A, B and C. All three Resolutions have recently been reconfirmed. Episcopal care was provided by the Bishop of Fulham until the end of 2010 and at the time of writing is being provided by the Bishop of Edmonton, until such time as a more permanent arrangement is made. The parish is affiliated to Forward-in-Faith.



The Annual Christingle Service

There are relatively few parishes of clearly Anglo-Catholic tradition in our part of the diocese. The Bishop of Rochester is keen to maintain a range of expressions of the Anglican way within the diocese, and sees St. John's as making a valuable contribution to this.

GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES:

- There is an active branch of the Mothers' Union, which meets regularly. Members also form a group meeting monthly for prayer.
- There is a large Cell of the Society of Our Lady of Walsingham, which organises pilgrimages to Walsingham and fundraising events in support of the Shrine and to help subsidise the cost of pilgrimage. The children's pilgrimage to Walsingham is attended additionally by youngsters from year 6 at St. John's School and from the local Cub Scouts.
- As well as the pilgrimages to Walsingham, there have in recent years been occasional pilgrimages to Lourdes, Boulogne and the Holy Land. Last year a group of parishioners walked from St. John's to Canterbury to raise money for new robes for the serving team.



Walkers on the Pilgrimage to Canterbury

- The Youth Group (“Bobs”) for children of secondary school age meets monthly on a Sunday evening.
- A Bible Study group, led by a Reader, is well established and meets monthly.
- Members of the parish belong to The Guild of All Souls and the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. Some have recently joined the Society of St Wilfrid and St Hilda.



Children's Pilgrimage to Walsingham

- There is a weekly opportunity for socialising over coffee after the main Sunday Mass and a wide range of other social activities throughout the year. These include a New Year's Day walk in Knole Park, a parish pantomime every January and themed evenings of food and entertainment at other times in the year. These are popular and highly valued aspects of parish life.



The Annual Parish Pantomime

- There is a cricket team formed of members of the parish and their

friends which plays outdoors during the summer and indoors in the winter. Our indoor team came top of their local league in 2011.

PARISH STAFF AND SUPPORT:

CLERGY:

- For a long time St John's has been a **training parish**. The last **Assistant Curate** left to join the Ordinariate in March 2011. The PCC would welcome the appointment of a successor in due course, though the issue of affordability would need to be addressed, since in Rochester Diocese parishes are at present responsible for paying the stipends of Assistant Curates. A retired priest who is authorised to officiate in the Diocese acts as **Honorary Assistant Priest** in the Parish.

LAITY:

- There are **two Readers** and **one Reader Emeritus**. The two Readers are included in the rota for preaching at the 10am Mass, assist at other services, lead the Bible Study group and have a Ministry in the local residential homes. Both of them are approaching 70 and St John's needs to look for younger members of the congregation who are called to this Ministry. The Reader Emeritus teaches in the Sunday School and at present leads collective worship for the Church School.
- There are **two Pastoral Assistants** who undertake certain pastoral tasks under the supervision of the Vicar.
- There is a **team of Sunday School teachers**, guided and led by the Reader Emeritus.
- The **Organist and Choirmaster** is responsible for the music sung at services.
- There is a team of **servers** of both sexes and all ages.
- A **Youth Worker** looks after the young people in the congregation.
- A **Parish Administrator** works for one morning a week assisting with administration.

- A member of the congregation acts as editor of the parish magazine and maintains the parish website. Another member of the congregation compiles the weekly pew sheet.
- Other members of the congregation assist with cleaning the church, maintaining the garden, flower arranging, catering and organising social events.

FINANCE: The Church's income depends upon stewardship, an annual gift day, and investments. A substantial bequest early in this century has resulted in the parish being in a better financial state than many. The need to pay two stipends as well as meeting other expenditure has required the parish to draw upon some of its capital in order to cover its operating costs in recent years, but with only one stipend to pay it should prove possible to match income more closely to expenditure in future. More financial information is available on request.

St. John's School

St. John's C of E (Controlled) Primary School lies within the parish. The current roll is 104 pupils and will rise in September 2011. There are 12 teaching staff, some of whom are part-time and job-share. There are 8 Teaching Assistants. Most pupils come from within the parish or Sevenoaks itself, but some travel from further afield. English is the second language for some of the pupils.

The present headteacher has been in post since September 2009 and has managed the increasing roll well. The most recent Ofsted report recognised the improvements in the school and rated it satisfactory with some good elements. The corresponding SIAS (Statutory Inspection for Anglican Schools) rated the school as good overall.

The school has close links with the parish. Until recently the Vicar has served as the chairman of the governors. The present chairman is the Reader Emeritus and there is one foundation governor from the congregation, four more who serve as either associate or parent governors and an

other who acts as clerk to the governors. The chairman leads an act of worship once a week in the church for the school and two of the governors help on a weekly basis in the school.



St John's School's Nativity

Beyond Parish Boundaries

SYNODICAL REPRESENTATION: The parish is represented at all levels:

- **General Synod:** one member of the House of Laity.
- **Diocesan Synod:** two lay members.
- **Deanery Synod:** we currently provide the Secretary, Treasurer and four members.

LINKS WITH THE DIOCESE AND WITH OTHER PARISHES AND DENOMINATIONS: St John's is a member of the Sevenoaks and District branch of Churches Together and provides the Treasurer of the

branch. It cooperates with other parishes in the town in the yearly Christian Aid fundraising collections. The PCC would like to strengthen the links with other churches in Sevenoaks and to play an active part in ecumenical activity. St John's also has some links with other Forward in Faith parishes and the PCC chairman is the lay chairman of Rochester diocese Forward in Faith.

OVERSEAS LINKS: As part of its wider mission and its charitable giving, St John's maintains links overseas with:

- The Church in Papua New Guinea and in the Solomon Islands. St. John's supports the work of the church in Papua New Guinea through the Papua New Guinea Church Partnership. Bishops from the church visit from time to time to talk about their work.
- The Philokalia Society, a registered Russian Orthodox charity which cares for street children, the sick and the elderly in Moscow. This developed out of an earlier parish to parish link. There have been visits in both directions. The All Souls' Altar is decorated with Russian banners as a visible reminder of this link.



The All Souls Altar

SEVENOAKS AREA YOUTH TRUST (SAYT): This local Christian youth trust supports the young people of the area in several ways, for example by running “drop in” sessions at a number of venues and by helping to establish and run Christian Unions in local schools. St. John’s contributes financially to the work of SAYT and its own Youth Worker is an active SAYT volunteer.

Looking Ahead

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT:

The departure of the Vicar and a number of parishioners to the Ordinariate in March 2011 was a setback, but the congregation is in good heart and St John’s has considerable strengths. The life and worship of the parish have continued without interruption. Daily services have been maintained and members of the congregation have come forward to take the place of those office-holders who left. Attendance at weekday Masses has actually increased. St John’s has a reputation as a friendly and welcoming church. Our finances, while requiring some attention, are in better shape than those of many churches. The vacancy provides an opportunity to identify and address areas of weakness and there is plenty of enthusiasm in the congregation for developing the life and worship of the parish. The successful ‘Fan the Flame’ mission that took place in June 2010 generated many ideas about how this can be done. What we need is a priest who will lead us in this work.



The following main priorities have been identified:

- Encouraging more people to share our faith and worship, especially by bringing more younger adults and children into the church. We believe that there is scope for doing this, for example by increasing our outreach activities and by exploring other forms of worship to complement the central role of the Mass.
- Strengthening our links with other churches in Sevenoaks. While

preserving our heritage as part of the Anglo-Catholic tradition in the Church of England, we would like to work more closely with other Christians in Sevenoaks.

- Involving the church closely in the local community, including by sustaining the links with the schools in the parish and in particular with St John's School.
- Developing and using the talents of members of the congregation so that as many as possible are able to contribute to the mission of St John's and are valued for doing so.

THE INCUMBENT SOUGHT: In the light of the above, and while it is unreasonable to expect that all of the desired attributes will be found, ready-made, in any one applicant for the Incumbency, St. John's, through its PCC, seeks a new Parish Priest willing and able, with God's help:

- To teach the Catholic faith and maintain the Catholic tradition of the parish within the life and worship of the Church of England and to underpin his ministry with a strong discipline of personal devotion and prayer.
- To lead the people of St. John's through the controversies which may lie ahead in the Church of England, showing understanding and tolerance of the views of all within the congregation.
- To pursue growth and renewal in the parish and to minister to parishioners ranging from the long term faithful to new Christians and young Christians and to be able to support individuals on their spiritual journey.
- To encourage lay Ministries.
- To give pastoral care to his people and to be available to all who turn to him in need.
- To build good relationships with clergy of other churches in the area and encourage participation in ecumenical activities.
- To be actively involved in parish and community life and to be able to relate to people from all backgrounds.
- To maintain and develop our links with St John's School.
- To lead pilgrimages to Walsingham.

The PCC expresses no preference between a celibate or a married priest.

Appendices

APPENDIX I

SCHOOLS IN SEVENOAKS:

Primary Schools: In addition to St John's School, there is a selection of good state primary schools in Sevenoaks and the surrounding villages, including one within the parish.

Secondary Schools: The state sector in Kent employs selection at 11 + (Year 6). As there are no grammar schools in Sevenoaks, pupils selected for grammar school places normally travel to Tonbridge (approx. 6 miles) or Tunbridge Wells (approx. 10 miles). Knole Academy, which is coeducational, was created in September 2010 by the amalgamation of the two non-selective single sex schools in the town.

Some pupils from Sevenoaks go to other High Schools within the area, including:

- The Bennett Memorial Diocesan School (an Academy) in Tunbridge Wells;
- The Church of England Humanities College in Gravesend;
- Mascalls School at Paddock Wood;
- Hugh Christie School at Tonbridge.

Independent Schools: The Independent sector is well-represented within Sevenoaks at both primary and secondary levels.

APPENDIX II

USEFUL WEBSITES:

www.saintjohnthebaptist.org.uk	The parish website
www.st-johns-sevenoaks.kent.sch.uk	The Church School website
www.sevenoaks.gov.uk	Sevenoaks District Council website
www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk	Sevenoaks Town Council website
www.kent.gov.uk/education_and_learning.aspx	Kent County Council Schools website

