

STEVINGTON PARISH PROFILE



ST MARY THE VIRGIN CHURCH – STEVINGTON

A THE UNION OF TWO PARISHES

This profile relates to the Parish of Stevington, one of two Parishes of Turvey and Stevington.

Website – www.stevington.org.uk – links on this website include St Mary’s Church – *being updated*, The Friends of St Mary’s Church as well as other Stevington organisations.

1 LOCATION

Stevington is a village in the Borough of Bedford and is located in the valley of the River Great Ouse, approximately six miles north-west of Bedford. Neighbouring villages include Bromham, Oakley, Pavenham and Turvey.

2 COMMUNITY

The population of Stevington is approximately 650.

The stone dwellings of the 17th and 18th centuries give the village its character. Brick was not used until the 19th century. The modern development took place first of all between the two world wars, then in the late 1960s and early 1970s and latterly in 1999.

The village has constantly adapted to change over the centuries and continues to do so, but in spite of everything has continued to be a close-knit community.

3 EDUCATION

There are no schools in Stevington and most children of school age travel by bus to various schools in neighbouring villages including Sharnbrook, Felmersham, Harrold, Oakley and Bromham Lower School – all within a radius of about 6 miles. Others travel to Bedford to attend one or other of the Harpur Trust schools or private schools.

4 LEISURE AND RECREATION

The village boasts a Social Centre which is used by a carpet Bowling Club, Table Tennis, meetings of the Historical Trust, Burns Night, Dances Concerts etc. One of the highlights of the year is the Christmas Concert at which the musical and performing talents of the villagers come to the fore.

There is a playing field adjacent to the Social Centre, equipped with children's playground items.

The Church Room, situated about 350 yards from the Church, serves as a leisure centre, and is regularly used by an active Women's Institute, as well as Church events such as the Harvest Supper and Autumn Fayre. As the room is adjacent to the Manor House gardens, it also serves as a refreshment room, when the gardens are open to the public several times a year. Proceeds from these are donated to charities.

A nurse visits the Church Room regularly once a month to deal with minor ailments and health problems.

There are no shops or post office in the village, but a well-stocked Community Shop, run on a voluntary basis in the Church Room, serves the village with a wide variety of food and household goods.

The Royal George is the only public house at present. The Red Lion closed recently and is being considered for re-development as a Gastro Pub.

5 WORSHIP

Eucharist is celebrated every Sunday morning at 9.30 am except for the fourth Sunday in the month which is devoted to Evensong at 6.00 pm. Average attendance (15) is disappointingly low. The age is mostly over 50 with occasionally one or two children. However, the number of children attending on special occasions is encouraging - 40 plus at Christingle. The young people enjoy the traditional Easter Egg Hunt in the Churchyard following the service on Easter Sunday. Eucharist and Imposition of the Ashes is held on Ash Wednesday. Attendance at Mothering Sunday is generally slightly above average.

Services at Christmas include Dressing the Crib, Nine Lessons and Carols, Midnight Mass and Christmas morning Eucharist.

Remembrance Sunday Service is held around the War Memorial in the Churchyard. By tradition, the Baptist Minister conducts this service on alternate years.

Compline Services are held on Wednesday evenings throughout Lent.

Regular worship is traditional, following the Common Worship Lectionary and using Hymns ancient and modern.

On certain occasions during the year we unite in worship with the Baptist Church, either at the Baptist Church at Stevington's West End or at St Mary's.

We have 2 servers, 3 organists and 7 sidesmen who operate to a monthly rota. Our Bell-ringers normally ring before each morning service and as required on other occasions.

We do not have a regular choir, but for special occasions, especially at Christmas we are able to draw on a number of the congregation and others who form themselves into a choir.

On average annually, we conduct 4 weddings, 6 funerals and 2 baptisms.

6 PASTORAL AND ECUMENICAL

As this is a new Benefice, it has not established any pastoral opportunities. The Parish is fortunate in that the Rev'd Macdonald (has continued as our visiting Minister since his retirement about 7 years ago). He knows the Parish well and his continued Pastoral care is much appreciated.

Relationship with the Baptist Church is very good and the Baptist Minister too gives excellent Pastoral care.

There are no regular local Churches Together or sharing agreement but we do unite in worship with the Baptist Church on an ad hoc basis.

Other than the Baptists and one Catholic, as far as we are aware there are no members of other Christian denominations who worship in the Church of England.

7 LEADERSHIP

The Churchwardens see their leadership as being most effective by setting an example, always being approachable and prepared to listen to the needs of the parishioners and to support the Ministers and the PCC in every way. They also consider it vital that the Church and Churchyard are kept in good repair and in a clean and tidy condition as a fit and proper place for regular worship. Strict attention is given to keeping the Registers and Burial Records up to date and in good order.

The PCC comprises 9 members, plus the two Churchwardens who are ex officio, ranging in age from about 45 to 85. The Council meets regularly, the Annual General Meeting being in April, when the Churchwardens are elected/ re-elected and the previous year's accounts are presented by the Treasurer and received for adoption. While there are no sub-committees, various members are allocated to specific tasks.

8 MINISTERIAL TEAM

At present we are fortunate that in addition to Rev'd Macdonald, Rev'd Eric Royden takes two of our services each month. Until her recent retirement, Rev'd Jo Spray of Turvey willingly responded to our request for help on odd occasions.

9 ELECTORAL ROLL

The Electoral Roll stands at 45.

10 ORGANISATIONS

One of our shortcomings is that there are no organisations for Church members, apart from the recently re-formed “Friends of St Mary’s Church”. Membership of this organisation is open to both church and non-church members.

11 BUILDINGS

The Church of St Mary the Virgin is medieval and rich in History. The earliest surviving part of the present day church is the lowest third part of the tower, which probably dates from the early 10th century. The church roof and a second stage to the tower were raised in the 15th century. Restoration work was carried out in the early part of the 19th century.

There are currently no toilet facilities, but we are in the process of having plans and quotations prepared for a toilet and kitchenette facilities. This will proceed subject to the granting of a faculty and we are liaising with the Diocesan Advisory Committee and English Heritage.

The Church is Grade I listed.

The Quinquennial Report of 18th June 2009 stated “As a result of the PCC’s considerable efforts over the past years, the fabric of the building is in a good, sound state of repair. Apart from items of routine maintenance, the report made the following recommendations:

- Repoint loose lead flashings (completed)
- Cap redundant flue above Tower roof (completed)
- Provide more permanent fixing for the flag pole (currently being considered)

The Church Room, referred to in Section 4, has a toilet and kitchen.

12 FINANCE

The PVCC holds operating funds adequate for the day to day running of the Church. In addition the Parish holds a sum in endowments, part of which is restricted.

Giving is encouraged through envelopes so that income tax can be reclaimed under the Gift Aid scheme as appropriate.

Donations to mission and charity are made on an ad hoc basis.

The Diocesan Quota for the year 2010 was £4695.

13 EXPENSES OF OFFICE

Expenses are paid in full, mainly to visiting clergy.

The level of expenses paid during the year end 31st December 2009 was £1,620.

There are no secretarial or office provisions.

14 COMMUNICATIONS

We publish a monthly St Mary's Church newsletter giving details of services and events for the coming month together with other newsworthy items. 40 copies are distributed by hand and 33 copies by Email.

A community magazine published quarterly, is distributed to every household. One page in every issue is devoted to news of St Mary's Church.

15 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Strength of the Parish lies in the facilities that the Church offers for worship and recreation. This will be enhanced when proposed toilet and kitchenette facilities within the Church come to fruition by encouraging greater use of the Church for concerts and social events.

"The Friends of St Mary's Church" is a registered Charitable Trust comprising eight enthusiastic trustees, four of whom are on the Electoral Roll and four non-churchgoers. The object of the Friends" group is to assist the PCC by raising funds for ongoing renovation and improvement works to the church, churchyard and church room. The launch of the newly re-formed "Friends" took place in November and was greeted with great enthusiasm.

Community and fund-raising events organised by the PCC (and recently the "Friends") are always popular and well-attended. The year 2010 was particularly active and included Open Garden Teas, Harvest Supper, Autumn Fayre and Launch of the Friends.

Weaknesses lie in the small number of worshippers in comparison to those on the Electoral roll. A lack of organisations for Church members and non members. The small number of individuals willing to assist, particularly in the younger generation. These issues need to be addressed.

B FUTURE PRIORITIES

Encourage greater use of the Church for worship as well as social events including young people as well as older generations.

Establish organisations for both Church members as well as the wider Community.

C NEW INCUMBENT PROFILE

We are looking for someone to meet the challenge of building upon an existing firm foundation by encouraging those on the Electoral Roll to become more regular worshippers. To bring ideas for increasing the number of worshippers among the young people as well as older generations, and to overcome the weaknesses listed in Section 15.