



THE CHURCHES
CONSERVATION TRUST

Historic churches in
Kent

reveal the
richness
of history

visitchurches.org.uk/daysout

the historic treasures of the garden of England

Kent's historic churches are as beautiful and distinctive as the county itself.



Some are Medieval gems, set gloriously amid the rolling Downs, where pilgrims bound for Canterbury would pause and pray. Others were built on trading riches and are grand survivors of savage French sea attacks.

They inspired Charles Dickens – let them do the same for you. Take time out to visit the extraordinary treasures that are the historic churches of Kent.

All the churches in this leaflet have been saved by The Churches Conservation Trust. The Trust is a charity that cares for more than 340 churches in England. This is one of 18 leaflets that highlight their history and treasures.

For more information on the other guides in this series, as well as interactive maps and downloadable information, see visitchurches.org.uk



step into history

Experience 900 years of beautiful craftsmanship in St Mary the Virgin church, Fordwich, England's smallest town



Cooling, St James

Inspiration for a dramatic Dickensian scene

1

- Late 13th-century church with carved font and beautiful arcades
- Some of the oldest Medieval furniture in England

Charles Dickens used the churchyard of St James as his inspiration in the opening chapter of *Great Expectations*, where the hero Pip meets Magwitch the convict. Here, you can find what have become known as ‘Pip’s Graves’ – the forlorn gravestones of 13 children that Dickens describes in the chapter. The site – on the Hoo Peninsula – is dramatically bleak in winter, recalling the opening scene in David Lean’s 1946 film of the book.

Inside, the church is light and spacious. There is a 500-year-old timber door that still swings on its ancient hinges – even though it now leads to a blocked north doorway! Another quirky feature is the 19th-century vestry – its walls are lined from top to bottom with thousands of cockle shells.

Dickens fans should also visit St Mary’s in Higham, the village where the novelist ended his days while writing *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

Main Road, Cooling, Rochester ME3 8DG

→ 6m N of Rochester off B2000

Nearest railway station: Higham (3.3 miles)

🕒 Open daily, 10am-4pm



Sandwich, St Peter

A landmark church that still rings a curfew

2

- Medieval church from a once prosperous trading and military port
- Beautiful stone tombs and monuments

St Peter’s is the guardian of an ancient Sandwich tradition. Every day, at 8pm, the curfew bell rings out, signalling that the townspeople should cover their fires to make them safe for the night. This was once known as the ‘pigbell’, as it also informed people they could release their animals into the street.

This old Cinque Port church is a local landmark. Much of today’s building dates from 800 years ago, though it has been altered many times. The handsome tower with its distinctive onion dome top is a 17th-century addition – built by Flemish protestant refugees, in the style of their homeland churches.

Inside, the church is spacious and airy, with few furnishings. The atmospheric 13th-century crypt – open by arrangement – was once a charnel house where bones from the graveyard were stored to make room for new graves.

Market Street, Sandwich CT13 9DA

→ Sandwich town centre

Nearest railway station: Sandwich (0.3 miles)

🕒 Open daily but may close at short notice;
call 01304 621554 for information



3

Fordwich, St Mary the Virgin

900 years of
craftsmanship in a
lovely shingle church

This historic church stands in an idyllic spot near the river Stour, leaning somewhat, as a result of a 15th-century flood. Inside, the church is mellow and unspoilt, with 17th-century fittings and wall paintings. It is home to a strange carved stone, dating from around 1100. Nearly 1.7 metres long, the stone is thought to be a shrine made for the body parts – or relics – of a saint, maybe St Augustine of Canterbury.

The Drove, Fordwich, Canterbury CT2 0DE
→ 3m NE of Canterbury off A28
Nearest railway station: Sturry (1.5 miles)

🕒 *Open daily, 11am-3pm*



4

Swingfield, St Peter's

A place of worship for
the Knights Hospitallers

A huge 13th-century tower dominates this medieval church in a quiet location on the Kent Downs. The church has close links with the Knights Hospitallers whose Commandery still stands across the fields. The church has much to discover, including a 14th-century porch with two Medieval 'Mass Dials' (sundials to tell the service times) and a 14th-century font which was rescued from a garden in 1914.

The Street, Swingfield Street, Swingfield, Kent, CT15 7HA
→ 7 miles north of Folkestone. Located to the east of the A260 Canterbury to Folkestone Road
Nearest railway station: Temple Ewell (5 miles)

🕒 *Open daily, 10am-4pm*



5

Waldershare, All Saints

Wondrous memorials in
a lovely church interior

This pretty 'walkers' church' dates back to Norman times and is set on the beautiful North Downs. The south chapel of 1697 contains a touching memorial to the Bertie family, with life-size marble figures of a husband and wife holding hands. In the north chapel is a fantastical monument to Sir Henry Furness (d. 1712) – tiered like a wedding cake and flanked by statues of women mourners and cherubs, it almost scrapes the chapel ceiling.

Sandwich Road, Waldershare, Dover CT15 5AT
→ 3m N of Dover, on minor road parallel to A256
Nearest railway station: Shepardswell (3 miles)

🕒 *Open daily, 10.30am-3.30pm*



6

West Stourmouth, All Saints

A Saxon survivor in the
Garden of England

This picture-postcard church stands hidden by trees in a delightful setting by the Little Stour. When visiting, you first see the small spire and bell tower then the beautiful flint, ragstone and brick body of the church. Inside, the church is furnished with box pews – some with beautiful carving – a 17th-century pulpit and a handsome organ, still showing the original pumping lever. The attractive tiled flooring contains three interesting memorial stones.

Church Lane, West Stourmouth, Canterbury CT3 1HT
→ 4m N of Wingham off B2046
Nearest railway station: Minster (5 miles)

🕒 *Open daily, 10am-4pm*

visitchurches.org.uk/daysout

Spend a day with us

More churches to enjoy

Each CCT church has been saved because it is special. We can't do justice to them all in one leaflet, so visit our website for more information on those only briefly described here.

Burham, St Mary

7

This stocky flint-and-ragstone church stands under the Downs on the pilgrims' route to Canterbury. The rustic, partially plastered interior is lovely. There are two Norman fonts.

Old Church Road, Burham, Rochester ME1 3XY

→ 5m NW of Maidstone off A229

🕒 *Open daily, 10am-4pm*

Capel, St Thomas à Becket

8

Becket himself is said to have preached in this Norman Wealden church. Medieval wall paintings depicting Cain and Abel and Christ's Entry into Jerusalem were discovered and restored in 1967.

Church Lane, Capel, Five Oak Green, Tonbridge TN12 6SX

→ 4m E of Tonbridge off B2017

🕒 *Open daily, 10am-4pm; at other times keyholder nearby*

Capel-le-Ferne, St Mary

9

Lovely, remote church hugging the downland above Folkestone, with views across the channel. The church has a squat flint tower, a Norman window and an unusual 14th-century altar screen.

Manor House Lane, Capel-le-Ferne, Folkestone CT18 7EX

→ 2m NE of Folkestone off B2011

🕒 *Open daily, 10am-4pm*

East Peckham, St Michael

10

Beautiful Norman church on a hilltop with glorious views over the Medway Valley to the Weald. It contains two centuries of memorials to the Twysden family and some lovely headstones in the churchyard.

Old Church Lane, East Peckham, Tonbridge TN12 5NG

→ 2m N of East Peckham off B2016

🕒 *Open daily, 10am-4pm*

Goodnestone, St Bartholomew

11

This tiny unspoilt gem of a Norman church stands on a knoll above Goodnestone Court, a half-timbered, 15th-century building. The porch was rebuilt in 1837 after an earth tremor.

Goodnestone Court, Goodnestone, Faversham ME13 9BZ

→ 1.5m E of Faversham and 1.5m N of Junction 7 of the M2, A2 and A229

🕒 *Open daily, 10am-4pm*

Higham, St Mary

12

An unusual flint-banded church standing by the Thames marshes; thought to have been part of a priory long since lost. Lovely Victorian glass gleams in the windows.

Church Street, Lower Higham, Rochester ME3 7LS

→ 4m NW of Rochester off B2000

🕒 *Open daily, 9am-6pm*

Kingsdown, St Catherine

13

The only complete Anglican church designed by EW Pugin, with a needle-sharp spire and richly coloured stained glass. Inside and out, it is a time capsule of Victorian church design.

Kingsdown, Sittingbourne ME9 0AS

→ 4m SE of Sittingbourne and S of M2 between Doddington and Milstead

🕒 *Open daily, 9am-6pm*

Knowlton, St Clement

14

Cherubs bathe in coloured light in this pretty Medieval church, set in the grounds of Knowlton Court manor house. The lovely interior features carved wood, marble monuments and beautiful stained glass.

Knowlton Court, Knowlton, Canterbury CT3 1PT

→ 4m SW of Sandwich off A256

🕒 *Open daily, 10am-5pm*

Luddenham, St Mary

15

The 850-year-old church of St Mary's is hidden in a farmyard on marshland fringes. Inside, the carved hands on a 13th-century coffin lid are depicted holding a heart.

Luddenham Court, Luddenham, Faversham ME13 0TH

→ 2m NW of Faversham

🕒 *Open daily, 9am-6pm*

Paddlesworth, St Benedict

16

This tiny pilgrim church beside a farmhouse on the Pilgrim's Way is at least 900 years old. With just a simple chancel and nave, it still has the aura of a Norman place of prayer.

Paddlesworth Road, Snodland ME6 5DR

→ 1m W of Snodland off A228

🕒 *Open daily, 10am-4pm*

Sandwich, St Mary

17

A church of Norman origin in the heart of historic Sandwich. The interior is intimate and atmospheric, with a beamed roof, supported by slender columns of chestnut wood.

Strand Street, Sandwich CT13 9EU

→ Sandwich town centre

🕒 *Open daily, 10am-4pm*

visitchurches.org.uk/joinus

Become a supporter

Finding our churches

The map opposite shows the location of each of our churches in Kent, together with other nearby attractions and CCT churches in adjoining counties.

Our website, visitchurches.org.uk, has much more detailed information to help you plan your trip.



		Ordnance Survey ref
1	Cooling, St James	TQ 756 759
2	Sandwich, St Peter	TR 331 580
3	Fordwich, St Mary the Virgin <i>(cover image)</i>	TR 181 598
4	Swingfield, St Peter's	TR 233 434
5	Waldershare, All Saints	TR 298 483
6	West Stourmouth, All Saints	TR 256 628
7	Burham, St Mary	TQ 717 620
8	Capel, St Thomas à Becket	TQ 637 445
9	Capel-le-Ferne, St Mary	TR 257 400
10	East Peckham, St Michael	TQ 661 522
11	Goodnestone, St Bartholomew	TR 044 616
12	Higham, St Mary	TQ 716 742
13	Kingsdown, St Catherine	TQ 925 587
14	Knowlton, St Clement	TR 281 534
15	Luddenham, St Mary	TQ 992 631
16	Paddlesworth, St Benedict	TQ 684 621
17	Sandwich, St Mary	TR 329 584

 CCT churches in neighbouring counties.
For details, go to visitchurches.org.uk or see the relevant county guide.



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Other local heritage attractions

- A** Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway
- B** Battle of Britain Museum
- C** Walmer Castle and gardens 
- D** Leeds Castle – garden, parkland, events
- E** The Historic Dockyard, Chatham
- F** Rochester Castle 

- G** Lullingstone Roman Villa 
- H** Chartwell – house, garden 
- I** Hever Castle – gardens, events
- J** Richborough Roman Fort 



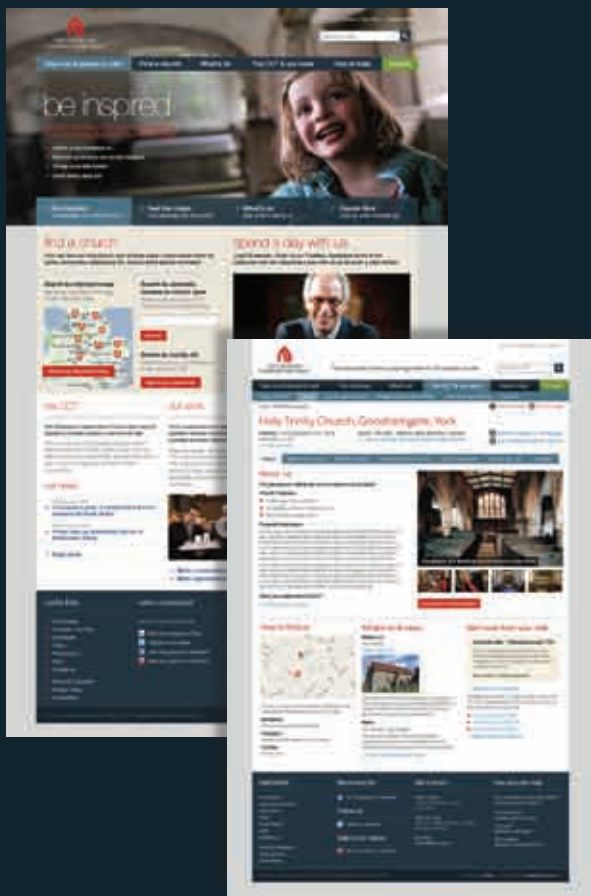
www.english-heritage.org.uk
Telephone 0870 333 1181

Find out more

Our website has a host of additional information that will help you plan and enjoy your visit, including:

- Interactive maps
- Filterable lists of all our churches
- Up to date opening times
- Visitor comments
- Downloadable guides
- Image galleries
- Event listings

Go to visitchurches.org.uk to access all this and more.



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Welcome to a thousand years of English history

The Churches Conservation Trust is the national charity protecting historic churches at risk.

We've saved over 340 beautiful buildings which attract more than 1.5 million visitors a year. With our help and with your support they are kept open and in use – living once again at the heart of their communities.


Visiting information


Go to visitchurches.org.uk for detailed directions, local maps, information on disability access and up to date opening times.

For other enquiries, call us on **020 7213 0660** (Monday – Friday, office hours), or email welcome@tcct.org.uk

! Please take care when visiting our churches. Floors may be uneven/worn or slippery, and interior lighting may be low.


 Assistance dogs are welcome.

 For full disabled access information, see our website.

 Unsure about the 'keyholder nearby' access? You will find details at the church or call us in advance.

P Parking is available at most churches – see the website for more details.

 The closest station for each church is shown in the guide.

 For bus routes, see traveline.org.uk

 Cyclists welcome! For cycle routes, go to sustrans.org.uk

Help us save historic churches

The CCT needs to raise an additional £1.5million every year just to cover essential repairs. If you enjoy your visit please leave a donation at the church, or go to visitchurches.org.uk/donate for details of how you can help.



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The Churches Conservation Trust
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