

## The Trail

Our guide takes the form of a walk clockwise round the church starting at the lychgate. Mind how you go: churchyards are seldom level and this one is no exception. Also be aware that headstones can be unstable and in summer there may be wasps nesting in the grass.

Take a moment to decipher the inscription on the beam inside the lychgate roof. It commemorates Jane Gipps, the Elder, who lived at the local manor of Howletts in Georgian and Victorian times. The Gipps family were prominent landowners around Canterbury and were important benefactors of St Peter's church during its restoration at the end of the 19th century.

You might wonder why the lych gate is not aligned with the track up the slope to the church. It is because access to the church in years gone by was via a footpath which starts in School Lane next to the Nailbourne and runs alongside the stream before turning up the hill to go past the flank wall of the white house known as Cobham Court.

The grassed field in front of the church belongs to Cobham Court and was used for grazing sheep and cattle until it ceased to be part of a farm in 1948.

Vehicles for the disabled and for special occasions such as wedding and funerals may use the gravelled track, known sometimes as the hearseway, by permission of the owners. Pedestrians may use the permissive track and enjoy the land but it is not a right of way.

[Use the postcode CT4 5ES for Satellite Navigation to St Peter's church; park in Old Palace Road.](#)

## The Cinque Ports Connection

Bekesbourne is a member of the Cinque Ports Confederation because of its medieval responsibility to supply a ship for the King's use. The Confederation was formed shortly before the Norman conquest as an arrangement for a supply of ships to guard the southern coastline. There were five ports initially and subsequently each added associate towns and villages.

Bekesbourne became a 'limb' of the port of Hastings after Godwin of Hastings was appointed in the late 11th century to keep and run a ship for the King. Godwin was given the manor of Bekesbourne in compensation for his expenses and he subsequently moved here. This meant that Bekesbourne was an integral part of the Borough of Hastings, paid taxes only to Hastings and came under the jurisdiction of the Court of Law there. The influence of the Cinque Ports gradually weakened over the centuries and Bekesbourne's link with Hastings came to an end in the 19th century.

[There is more about the history of the village in \*Bekesbourne: A little village with a big history\* \(2014\). See also \[www.bekesbourne.net\]\(http://www.bekesbourne.net\).](#)

[St Peter's: A History and Guide](#) is available to purchase inside the church. There is also a booklet on the bells and the Bevington organ.

The church is kept locked because of its vulnerable situation, however visitors are most welcome and can collect a key from Essentially Hops at Chalkpit Farm during shop hours. The farm is a short walk along the footpath through the woods behind the churchyard and then up School Lane past the old Oast house. There is a cafe in the farmyard and a selection of shops.

## St Peter's - Bekesbourne

### Churchyard Trail

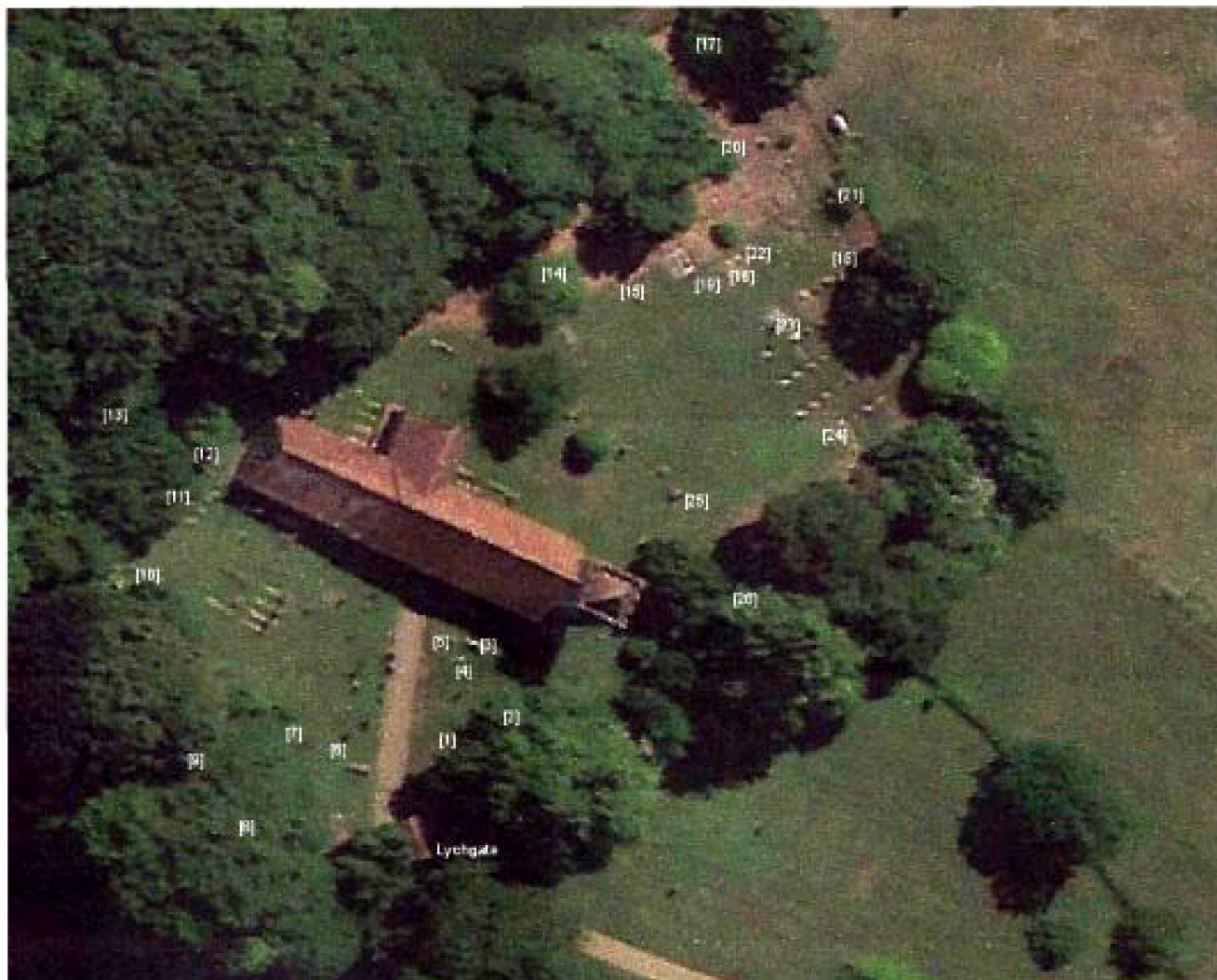


## Welcome

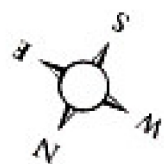
There has been a church on this site since Saxon times and continuous worship here for more than 800 years. It is an active church: we hold services at least three times a month and there is regular bell ringing. The churchyard is open for new burials and maintained by a team of volunteers including the families of some of those who are laid to rest here. We aim to keep a balance between neatness and wildlife.

We hope you will enjoy your visit and absorb the tranquillity of this lovely space and the stories of some of the people remembered here.

To enquire about baptisms, weddings and funerals contact the Vicar - [canonjonathanlloyd@gmail.com](mailto:canonjonathanlloyd@gmail.com) or 01227 830250.



Starting from the lychgate, use the numbers on this aerial photograph to locate the graves mentioned in the trail narrative overleaf. Work clockwise round the church from the north side to the south side



## The Churchyard

The churchyard was measured in 1840 by Thomas Cooper. In those times it comprised only the area immediately around the church and was exactly three rods ( $\frac{3}{4}$  acre). It was fenced and gated. However, sheep were allowed to graze and at his visitation on May, 29, 1867 the Rural Dean, recorded: 'Sheep in churchyard should be expelled – graves in very unseemly state'.

The churchyard was enlarged to the south in 1919 to become 1.05 acres. The extra land was to provide for the First World War memorial dedicated in October 1920 and to give more room for burials. In 2003 a space along the south wall of the nave was designated as a Garden of Remembrance for the interment of ashes.

## Poetry

Look out for the poetry on the headstones. Some inscriptions are biblical; others poetical; all meant much to those dedicating them to their loved ones.

## Imagery



The imagery of the headstones is also fascinating, especially on the 18th century headstones which have: skull and bones; winged cherubs; hourglasses; dragon's wings and other symbols reflecting the interests or occupation of the person or persons remembered.



As you walk up the path note the skull-and-crossbones-headed stone for the Beer family [1] which is in the front row on your right. This may be the oldest headstone in the churchyard. It commemorates the life of Elizabeth Beer who died aged twelve years and ten months in July 1685 and also her father and mother who died in 1697 and 1724 respectively.



Behind the Beer family headstone is a larger one for John Horn [2]. This has the elaborate carving typical of an 18th century headstone. Perhaps the trumpets were a pun on his name?

Nearer to the church door is [3] the pretty coffin-style grave of Jane Gipps, the Younger, and the kerbed graves of Henry Wardell [4], the vicar who master-minded the Victorian restoration of the church, and his wife Isabella.



Also their unmarried daughter, Isabella, who was the organist [5]. These prominent grave positions affirm the contribution these individuals made to the preservation of the church which was in sad repair at the time of their intervention at the end of the 19th century.

The Norman north doorway is the entrance to the church we use today. The arch is of Caen stone from Normandy. It dates from the mid-to-late 12th century. The carved heads may be portraits of the de Hastings family who were early church benefactors. The patriarch of the de Hastings, Godwin, was a man of standing who owned a ship which was used in the service of William I and is why Bekesbourne has a link with the Cinque Ports - see over.



Walking back down the path find set back on the right the gravestone [6] of Sarah Beaney. It was erected by her son, the Hon. Dr James Beaney MP of Melbourne. He was the benefactor of the Beaney Institute in Canterbury. His mother was living on Bekesbourne Hill with Beaney's sister, Mary, when she died in 1857. The Yew behind is a Millennium tree [7] grown from the Faversham Yew said to be over 2000 years old.



Close perusal of the graves in this part of the churchyard will find Walter and Lois Whigham [8] who are buried beside the boundary with the neighbouring garden of Cobham Court which was their family home from 1948. They planted many of the trees on this boundary.



Behind is the double-width grave of 'Kate' and 'Bob' Morphett [9]. Kate was a housekeeper in Bekesbourne. She lived in Hode Cottages with her husband Robert James

who was a special constable. We are fortunate to have a copy of Kate's funeral card. The lines on her headstone come from the last verse of the hymn on her card. Bob's epitaph comes from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians Chapter 2 verse 8: 'For by grace we are saved through faith'.

The next grave of universal note is that of William Goldup - Gunner with the Royal Field Artillery [10]. His is the only Commonwealth grave in our churchyard. William died shortly after the end of World War I in November 1918.

To the right a small tiered stone with a broken cross commemorates three of the children of Edmund Jarvis - the miller at Bekesbourne windmill from circa 1878 to 1891 [11]. Jarvis was described as 'a nice straightforward man with a long beard and fourteen children'. The children remembered here were all under three when they died.

Behind to the right is the grave of Philamore Lee, son of Divors and Mary Lee, a travelling man, who died in 1782 aged 18 years [12]. He was described in the burial register as a 'vagabond', however, the headstone is expensive for a person with no settled home and the carving on the top left appears to be a tailor's iron suggesting that tailoring was his trade.



The eastern boundary of the churchyard merges into Cobham Court woods and there is no dividing fence. The grand cross [13] set back close to the boundary commemorates the Hon. Rev. William Eden, vicar of Bekesbourne from 1820 to 1846, his wife Lady Anna Maria Grey de Ruthyn, and two of their children. The Edens were a family of considerable distinction: William's brother Robert Eden married Harriet, sister of Sir Robert Peel, founder of the police, and Prime Minister from 1834-1835 and 1841-1846.

Continuing round to the sunny side of the church move into the new part of the churchyard which was brought into use in 1920. The graves here are laid out in a grid system. All the spaces in the grid have been used but not all have commemorative stones as many families could not afford them in the difficult years of the early 20th century.

If the grass is not too high, search out the kerbed grave of Miss Ann Elizabeth Trees, the esteemed mistress of Bekesbourne school from 1884 to 1921 [14]. Clearly she was proud of her bicycle.



The twin graves [15] of Brenda Hulse and Winifred Rowland are distinctive. Both were aged fifteen when, sadly, they were involved in a cycling accident on December 8, 1955 on the Dover Road between Canterbury and Bekesbourne. The girls were cycling home from evening classes. They were members of St Peter's choir and are also commemorated by a plaque on the choir stalls.

Nearby is a tiny grave with a teddy bear engraved on its headstone [16]. It is a tribute to Maureen Clayson who had the shortest of lives in 1992 and has never been forgotten by her family who tend her grave (and those of other family members buried here) with utmost care.



Maureen's great grandfather, Mark Clayson, brought his wife, Ethel, to the 'Woodyard' on Bekesbourne Hill in 1906: a smallholding where they raised nine children. Members of the Clayson family have lived there ever since.



In the south corner of the graveyard you may be able to spot the angel statue which marks the grave [17] of another young girl from another long-standing Bekesbourne family. Patricia Wilson died age 10 in 1933. Her inscription reads 'God sees beyond the skyline. He never makes mistakes' - a line which derives from a best-selling book of 1913 titled 'Bees in Amber: a little book of thoughtful verse' by John Oxenham.

Other graves nearby include those of: Thomas and Mollie Ash [18] who farmed the land around here in the 1950s and their son, John, [19] who continued with the family farming tradition into the 21st century and was Chairman of the Parish Council for many years. Also in the long grass nearer the south boundary are Ernest Friend, who was bailiff of Chalkpit Farm, and his wife Norah [20]. All were closely associated with hop growing which has been part of Bekesbourne's rural economy for several hundred years and is still continued at Essentially Hops.



The Rowan tree next to the bench on the boundary [21] commemorates Simon Skinner and his father Brian, who was a founder member of the Friends of Bekesbourne Church in 1994 and designed its logo. Brian spent many hours maintaining this churchyard oft times with the help of his friend Tony Clifford [22].

Our memorial to the First World War [23] stands at the centre of this part of the churchyard and is a poignant reminder of the men from the village who lost their lives in the conflict. It was dedicated at a ceremony held on Sunday, October 10, 1920 by William Lygon, 7th Earl Beauchamp, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. Three further men are commemorated inside the church and there is also a plaque inside the church for the three military sons of the village and the one civilian who lost their lives in the Second World War. The Second World War memorial has the epitaph 'Precious pieces in the mosaic of victory'. In July 1918 a tree was planted to commemorate the signing of the peace to end the Great War, however, the stone has been moved and we no longer know which tree it was.

Below the memorial are the graves of many of those most recently buried. Look out for John Purchese [24] one-time churchwarden and Lord Mayor of Canterbury 1991 to 1992. Together with his wife, Anne, John is renowned for leading the successful campaign to create the Bridge A2 bypass in the 1970s.



The unusual gravestone [25] which takes the form of a broken pillar rising from a piece of hewn stone is for Dr Charles Beke. His memorial is intended to look broken and is not damaged. It is a Victorian symbol for a life cut short. Although Dr Beke was 74 when he died in 1874, his second wife Emily was only 24 and perhaps she felt cheated of more time with her husband. Dr Beke was an explorer. He believed that he was descended from the family that gave Bekesbourne its name and lived with Emily at the Old Palace for some years around 1860.

In front of the compost bins is the coffin-style grave of Robert Peckham and his wife, Elizabeth [26]. They lived at the Old Palace and Robert was responsible for the building of the brick bridge over the Nailbourne at the foot of the church path. A stone on the inner face of the bridge states it was built in 1776. It replaced an earlier wooden bridge said to be very dilapidated in 1647. The Peckham grave is one of many which once had railings.

Finally at the tower door note the attractive carved shields displaying the keys of St Peter and his entwined initials.



### Want to know more?

All the graves in our churchyard commemorate people with strong links with Bekesbourne and it has been difficult to single out those to include in this trail. There may be other graves you found interesting. A list of the headstones and their inscriptions (as far as we have been able to decipher them) is available on the Internet at [www.bekesbourne.net](http://www.bekesbourne.net). (printed 2015)