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Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage Strategy

Appendix 1: Theme 6 Church

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(6) Church

1. Summary

Folkestone & Hythe District has a rich religious heritage that is highlighted in a wide range of significant religious buildings, ruins as well as buried archaeological remains. These religious assets reflect not only the long and often dramatic history of Christianity in East Kent, but also the significance of Kent as the closest part of England to continental Europe making it the gateway through which new influences from the continent entered. Beginning with Augustine's mission to England in AD 597 through to the Reformation and progressively increasing liberalisation of religious practice, the religious heritage assets of the district are significant in following the progress of Christianity in Kent and the development of religious institutions within the district.

2. Introduction

The arrival of Christianity

Evidence of early Christianity in Britain is difficult to determine. By the early fifth century, the Romans had withdrawn from Britain and left its people vulnerable to repeated Saxon invasions that continued throughout the second half of the fifth century. The Saxons were pagans and a form of Germanic polytheism became the dominant religion in Britain as they settled whilst Celtic and Romano Christianity continued to flourish primarily in Wales and Ireland swept west by the invasions. By the sixth century, Pope Gregory was keen to convert the Anglo-Saxon people to Christianity and restore contact with Rome. In AD 597, Augustine arrived in Kent at Ebbsfleet with this objective. The Saxon and pagan King at the time Ethelbert, who had married the Christian Frankish Princess Bertha, invited Augustine to his capital in Canterbury to begin his mission of conversion. Due to its proximity to Canterbury, the conversion of people within the district to Christianity may have been among some of the first in Kent, although there is insufficient archaeological evidence to substantiate this. Nevertheless, there are significant religious assets from these early stages of Christianity within the District that evidence the beginnings of the church and its growing influential role in everyday Kentish life.

The early Church in the District

Compared with other counties, Kent has the earliest Anglo-Saxon churches in England dating from around the beginning of the seventh century AD. A number of these were established in east Kent following the arrival of Augustine in Canterbury in AD 597. Whilst remains of these early churches are largely fragmentary across the county, the district has significant surviving evidence of some of the earliest Anglo-Saxon churches as well as remains suggesting a distinctive Kentish form. More work is needed to identify further examples of Anglo-Saxon churches as many parish churches will have had an Anglo-Saxon predecessor that would likely have been incorporated into the fabric of later alterations and buildings. Nonetheless, the examples that exist in the district are not only amongst the earliest but are also significant because of their strong links to the Kentish royal house.

Arguably some of the oldest surviving church remains in the district can be seen at All Saints Church, Lydd, also known as 'The Cathedral on the Marsh'. Its origins were long thought to be Saxon, but recent studies have identified the oldest section of the church as being Romano-British and dating to the latter half of the fifth

century. A small basilica incorporated into the northwest corner which had an apse, an arcade on the north side of three bays and an elaborate porch on the west side is now believed to be Romano-British as it is distinctly different to other Anglo-Saxon church architecture. The remainder of the church is predominantly medieval in origin though it suffered extensive damage due to bombing during the Second World War and was subsequently restored. Throughout its life All Saints has been connected to a number of Fraternities and Guilds including St Peter, St Mary and St John the Baptist and continues to serve as the parish church today.

Other examples of surviving Saxon church remains can be found in Cheriton and Lyminge. St Martin's church in Cheriton exhibits a rare example of a west wall still remaining from the original Anglo-Saxon church building. Anglo-Saxon masonry is preserved in the west end of the nave with a round-headed west doorway and double-splayed window above it. It has also been suggested that the lower masonry of the western tower is also of Anglo-Saxon origin. Unfortunately, it is not possible to tell where the east end of the original nave or sanctuary was situated as no other evidence remains above ground predating the thirteenth century work to the church. Nonetheless the surviving Anglo-Saxon masonry present at St Martin's is important evidence of the early church in East Kent.

The site at Lyminge is among the most significant within the district when examining the early church in Kent. It is one of the earliest examples directly relating to the events of the Christian conversion and also illustrates strong links to the Kentish royal house as well as the relationship between church and state. Archaeological interest in the Anglo-Saxon past and monastic landscape of Lyminge has been recently reignited, and a number of excavations and studies of the site around the parish church of St Mary and St Ethelburga have taken place seasonally since 2005. This builds primarily on the earlier excavations done by Canon Jenkins during the 1860s, who was the reverend of Lyminge at that time. His excavations came about as a result of extensive restoration work to the church and uncovered parts of the seventh century structure to the south of the current church building. Various bodies have been involved in the recent works, including the Canterbury Archaeological Trust, the University of Reading and local archaeological groups. The Lyminge Archaeological Project was created as a result and much evidence has since been uncovered attesting to the importance of this site going as far back as the fifth century AD. It is arguably one of the most important monastic sites in the south of England and also shows evidence of being a key place in post-Christian Anglo-Saxon settlement.

The original church dates to the seventh century as mentioned above and lies beneath the present day church that is dedicated to the early Anglo-Saxon queen consort of Northumbria Ethelburga, later venerated as St Ethelburga following her death in 647 AD. It is also believed that there may have been a Roman villa at the site and materials from this structure were subsequently used in the construction of the original Anglo-Saxon church, a practice that isn't uncommon during this period. The earliest parts of the present church date to around 1080, just after the Norman Conquest, and surviving material from this phase of construction makes the church of St Mary and St Ethelburga an important example of early Norman religious building in addition to its significant Anglo-Saxon past. Further alterations to the building occurred during the twelfth, thirteenth and fifteenth centuries and it remains

a significant religious heritage asset within the district. As will be discussed during a later section of this paper, the site at Lyminge is also significant as one of the first monastic sites to be established in the district during the seventh century.

As was mentioned earlier, there is evidence from these early churches in the district of a distinctive 'Kentish type' in church design. Anglo-Saxon churches in Kent generally had a rectangular nave with no aisles and a western entrance. They may also have features such as a western porch and apsidal chancel. This form can be seen from the remains of the early Anglo-Saxon church at Lyminge though more research may be needed to substantiate this theory fully.

Other important examples of late Anglo-Saxon, early Norman church fabric can be found at the Church of St Oswald in Paddlesworth and the Church of St Mary in Sellindge. As the above has shown, the district includes some of the earliest and archaeologically significant church remains in Kent that are a testament to the important position of the county in the religious history of Britain.

The Medieval Church and Parochial System in the District

The parochial structure was almost completely established by AD 1100 resulting in around 500 parishes in Kent prior to the Black Death of the fourteenth century and later demographic and economic factors that would see this number reduced before the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Kent was divided into two dioceses, Canterbury established in 598 AD and Rochester in 604 AD. The District lies entirely within the diocese of Canterbury and witnessed a rapid growth in the number of religious houses within the monastic landscape from the twelfth century and continuing onwards for the next 300 years. This growth was witnessed across Kent and led to the classification of churches into a number of categories; including 'minster' or 'mother' churches and there subordinate 'daughter' churches.

The 'minster' or 'mother' churches are almost exclusively found in areas that were settled early on and were established on royal or ecclesiastical estates. The territory that they occupied would then be divided up so that subordinate 'daughter' churches roughly surrounded the 'mother' church to which they owed allegiance. This system clearly demonstrates the strong relationship between the royal houses and the development of the church. Examples of 'mother' churches in the district include Lydd (All Saints), New Romney (St Nicholas), Lyminge (St Mary and St Ethelburga), Lympne (St Stephen) and Folkestone (St Mary and St Eanswythe). It is often difficult to determine which were the 'daughter' parishes and churches, however churches at Stanford, Paddlesworth, Acrise, Stelling, Stowting and Monks Horton were believed to be subordinate to the Lyminge parish and church during this time. Folkestone was believed to have had 10 'daughter' churches.

A category of secondary 'mother' churches also existed. These churches shared many of the characteristics of the primary 'mother' churches, but generally had fewer subordinate churches and had broken away from their primary minster to become an independent parish. In the district, Saltwood (St Peter and St Paul) is the only example if this type of church.

The majority of the remaining medieval churches of the district were manorial, meaning that they were founded by members of the nobility either for their own

private use or to serve the local community. These churches then formed part of the parochial system and became subordinate to their respective ‘mother’ churches. An advantage of a nobleperson founding a church rather than the ‘mother’ church related to the tithe system in that the tithes of a manorial church would remain in the parish.

In addition to the churches, a number of chapels and chantries were also founded and numbered around 300 in Kent by 1350. These were established for a number of reasons that included chapels for pilgrims along pilgrimage routes, preceptories, attachments to hospitals and for marking holy sites; however, more commonly they were linked to manors for private use by the families. They also varied in their form, some being single-celled buildings whilst others became more substantial serving the parish and ‘mother’ church. This highlights that fact that whilst the territorial organisation of the church has largely been established by the twelfth century, socio-economic and demographic factors would continue to influence the development of the monastic landscape in Kent.

Some notable examples within the district included the Chapel of St Nicholas that stood outside of Hythe and from which the site is now known as ‘Chapel Field’. This chapel for St Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors, became a place of pilgrimage for fisherman landing or working around Hythe during the sixteenth century and offerings would be made for safe passage at sea. The Chapel of Our Lady at Lympne is celebrated for its connection to Elizabeth Barton, known as the Holy Maid of Kent, also during the sixteenth century and became a place of pilgrimage as a result. It is now in a ruinous state though some of the wall fabric survives despite damage during the Second World War.

Abbeys and Monasteries

Shortly following the conversion of the Kentish royal house to Christianity at the end of the sixth century AD, monastic houses began to be founded throughout the county. They were primarily under the Benedictine Order and housed monks or nuns, though on occasion they housed both. There are examples of other orders existing in Kent such as canons and nuns of the Augustinian Order and there were a small number of Franciscan Friars who lived in New Romney for a very short time during the later medieval period, though they didn’t last much longer than a single generation.

Folkestone & Hythe District was home to some of the earliest monastic houses in the country and they also demonstrate strong links to the Kentish royal house. The Folkestone Abbey, better known as Folkestone Priory, is arguably the first nunnery to have been established in this country. It was originally built in 630 AD by King Eadbald for his daughter Eanswythe, Eadbald being the son of the first Christian English King Ethelbert. Eanswythe founded and presided as Abbess over a community of Benedictine nuns here and the nunnery was dedicated to St Peter. When in 640 AD Eanswythe died, her remains were laid to rest at the monastery. She would later be venerated as St Eanswythe and her remains considered holy relics. It is believed that the original monastery was raided and destroyed by Vikings during the latter half of the ninth century AD, but the original site was also vulnerable to erosion of the cliffs edge where it stood and was subsequently lost to the sea. The holy relics of St Eanswythe were moved to the church of St Peter and St Paul further

inland before the site was completely lost. In 1095 Nigel de Mundeville, Lord of Folkestone, erected the second monastery at this site for Benedictine monks, though it was an alien priory belonging to the Abbey of Lonley or Lolley in Normandy. This monastery was dedicated to St Mary and St Eanswythe and it is believed that St Eanswythe's holy relics were transferred again from St Peter and St Paul's to the church at this site. As with its predecessor, the site was again undermined by the sea and so in 1137 William de Abrincis gave the monks a new site which is that of the present St Mary and St Eanswythe church. Once again the holy relics of St Eanswythe were transferred to the priory church, and this date (September 12th) is still celebrated today as the churches Patronal Festival.

Being an alien priory, it was occasionally seized by the King during times of war with France. It was eventually made independent of its mother-church in Normandy and was granted to Westminster Abbey in 1390. This seems to have saved it from dissolution during the reign of Henry V that befell many alien houses and in 1399 it was restored to its own priory. It continued to survive as an English Benedictine house until its suppression in 1535 during Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Between 1119 and 1193 Folkestone Priory was the most considerable priory in Kent and it was the only alien house in the county to have been more than a single cell. The only remains of the 1137 monastic buildings are a Norman doorway in the present church, though foundations of these earlier buildings have also been found near St Mary and St Eanswythe church. In 1885, workmen in the church discovered a reliquary made of lead buried in a niche in the church wall. The reliquary was finely decorated in a way that was believed to indicate a date of the twelfth century. Inside were found human skeletal remains that were identified as belonging to a young woman though the age of the bones has not been determined. It is believed that these are the holy relics of St Eanswythe and at first they were brought out for veneration every year on the parish Feast Day. Today the niche where the remains were recovered is lined with alabaster and the remains have been replaced and covered by a brass door and grille. Offerings are still left in front of this area today though the remains are no longer brought out for public veneration.

The district was home to another abbey originally dating to before the Norman Conquest. For some time, Lyminge has been understood as a royally-founded religious centre that is significant in the religious history of Kent and the establishment of Christianity. Archaeological evidence suggests that Lyminge was a 'central place' dating as far back as the fifth century AD, and is arguably one of the best preserved monastic sites in Kent. Like the Folkestone Priory, it was founded and presided over by a female member of the Kentish royal house who acted as Abbess. Lyminge Abbey was established in 633 AD by Ethelburga, daughter of King Ethelbert, who gained a grant of land from her brother King Eadbald. Historical sources indicate that this was a double monastery of both nuns and monks presided over by the royal Abbess Ethelburga. The monastic buildings here evidently formed an important part of the religious network within Kent and are significant as one of the earliest abbeys in Kent. Upon Ethelburga's death in 647 AD, she was venerated and her remains interred at the site of the monastery. Continuous Viking raids drove the nuns away from the monastery in 840 Ad and the monks later in 965 AD. By 964 AD the bulk of its endowment had been absorbed into the Lordship of Christ Church

and was then finally suppressed as an independent monastic house in 1085 by Archbishop Lanfranc. St Ethelburga's relics were translated to St Gregory's Priory in Canterbury and the remainder of the medieval manor at Lyminge was administered as an archiepiscopal estate.

Later excavations by Canon Jenkins during the 1860s were believed to have uncovered the remains of the monastic house to the south of the current St Mary and St Ethelburga church. Further archaeological exploration of the site has been done in more recent decades to build on this earlier work and more of the monastic site has now begun to be uncovered.

The twelfth century saw rapid growth in the number of religious houses being established in Kent. During this time Augustinian priories and monastic houses were being founded under new orders as a result of the growing popularity of the ecclesiastical reform movement among benefactors and lay patrons. In the district, there was a Cluniac priory at Monk's Horton that was founded around 1142 and dedicated to St John the Evangelist. It was intended to support a cell of twelve monks and did so until its dissolution in 1536 when it was leased to Richard Tate of Stockbury. Originally the priory is believed to have had buildings surrounding a quadrangular courtyard, the remaining rooms forming a one-storey west range and the chapel of the priory to the north side. By the late thirteenth century, the church had been newly roofed and cloisters had been extended. Today, only the west range of the cloistral buildings and a fragment of the west wall of the church remain above ground. There are also now private residential buildings at the site.

By the end of the twelfth century two military orders also had monastic houses within Kent; the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller. The Knights Hospitaller established a preceptory in Swingfield known as St John's Commandery after sisters from the same order were moved to Buckland Priory. It operated under the Order of St John of Jerusalem and appears to have been founded during the thirteenth century. Only the thirteenth century chapel building survives above ground today and is a mixed flint and stone building with stone quoins and dressings that was originally constructed as a farmhouse. St John's Commandery was suppressed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the late 1530s and was subsequently leased to various owners. St John's chapel is now under the care of English Heritage and can be visited by the public.

In 1264, an alien Cistercian house was established at New Romney as a cell of few monks of Pontigny. This alien house survived slightly longer into the Hundred Years War when compared to other alien houses, Folkestone Priory as an exception, and was not confiscated until 1439 when it was subsequently sold to the All Souls College at Oxford.

Hospitals and Alms Houses

Medieval Kent saw the establishment of a number of hospitals that were used to care for the poor and infirm, lepers and the growing number of travellers and pilgrims. Small establishments began to appear close to Watling Street, an ancient trackway first used by Britons moving between Canterbury and St Albans, and also the Kentish Cinque Ports. Most of the hospitals were founded by churchmen and notables rather than religious orders and ranged in size where the largest could cater

for up to 100 people, though the majority were much smaller in Kent. The hospitals had a significant spiritual role and many had a strong religious emphasis expecting their residents to carry out devotional duties. This may have declined over time as hospitals were also administered by secular authorities.

Generally, the main period of establishment was between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries though some of the main hospitals in the district were founded later in the fourteenth century. The Cinque Ports New Romney and Hythe were the primary locations of hospitals and alms houses in the district. At the time of the Dissolution, Hythe had two, St Bartholomew's hospital and St John's hospital. There is evidence that there may also have been a third hospital at one time in Hythe known as St Andrew's hospital. It is first mentioned in 1334, and in 1336 a licence was granted by Edward III to Hamo de Hethe Bishop of Rochester for the foundation of a hospital to be called St Andrew's and that would take in the poor people of Hythe. It would have held 10 people however there are no more references to the hospital and it seems that it became part of St Bartholomew's hospital that had also been founded by Hamo de Hethe around this time.

The original site of the St Bartholomew's hospital was in Saltwood and is mentioned in Pipe Rolls of 1168-1169. It was still at this site in 1336 and is believed to have transferred to the house known as Centuries on Bartholomew Street in Hythe later on during the seventeenth century. Centuries house is significant as it was the birthplace of Hamo de Hethe in 1275 and is today a Grade II* Listed Building. The intermediate history of this hospital is unknown but is seems clear that in 1685 inhabitants at St Bartholomew's hospital in Saltwood transferred to the Centuries house in Hythe and from this date onwards it became known as St Bartholomew's hospital. It could accommodate 13 people and operated as a hospital until 1949 when its residents were then transferred to the St John's hospital and the building ceased to be owned by the church and became divided into two privately owned flats in 1951.

The second in Hythe, St John's hospital, was founded during the fourteenth century but the known site dates to the sixteenth century. Mention of the alms house of St John's in Hythe being founded in 1546 is made and evidence suggests that the establishment could accommodate 8 people who were poor or had been injured during warfare. The building survives on the Hythe High Street and is a Grade II Listed Building.

New Romney also had two hospitals that were established between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. The first to have been founded in this area was the hospital of St Stephen and St Thomas in 1180. The hospital was founded to accommodate lepers although by 1350 there is evidence to suggest that there were no longer lepers at this site and that it had been re-founded for poor people. There is also evidence that the hospital towards the end of its life had become a chantry chapel for a local family in New Romney, the Brenchley family. However by 1481 the hospital was no longer in use and had become derelict. It was subsequently annexed to Magdalenian College, Oxford and now no remains exist above ground. Excavations were undertaken ahead of housing development on the site in 1955 and the foundations of a single-celled structure comprising the main building with a likely chapel were uncovered. A building suggesting use as a hall by the hospitals master

and clerks was also excavated although no evidence of cells in the main building were found which would have been expected in a leper hospital. This may mean that the original cell structures were wooden and all traces have now disappeared.

A hospital dedicated to St John the Baptist was founded around 1396 in New Romney. No remains of the hospital remain above ground and very little is understood about the foundation of the hospital. It is believed that it accommodated for the poor, aged and infirm although it had been dissolved by 1495. There was also a church and chapel at the site but again no remains survive above ground. Excavations in 1929 are believed to have uncovered the site for the church, and in 2005 and 2007 the Canterbury Archaeological Trust uncovered eight burials in Sussex Road that are likely to have come from the churchyard of St John's.

Besides New Romney and Hythe, unusually there is also evidence of a hospital being established at Ivychurch that may have sheltered the poor. It is believed to have been founded in the thirteenth century although little else is known about it and nothing survives of the building today. Folkestone and Lydd were also home to alms houses and a lazar house for a few leprous people at Lydd.

Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage is a journey in search of moral, spiritual and religious enlightenment, a chance to cleanse the sins and an opportunity to travel and experience 'holiness' through holy relics, holy places and shrines. Pilgrimage was an important part of medieval Christianity and gradually national and international pilgrimage routes were established. Not only did pilgrimage reinforce religious beliefs and help to spread religious influence, but the sites of pilgrimage could become quite rich from offerings made and religious authorities would compete to obtain precious religious artefacts and relics.

Kent, due to the Christian Conversion beginning with Augustine's arrival in 597 AD, had a number of early saints and may have had a number of shrines though surviving evidence may no longer fully demonstrate this. Pilgrimage in Kent has been particularly affected by the shrine to St Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. From the thirteenth century, it has been one of the most important sites for pilgrimage in Christendom and has attracted pilgrims from across the Christian world. In the district, there is some evidence for sites that were visited in pilgrimage. A dispute over offerings made at a crucifix in St Leonard's church at Hythe was made to the Pope in 1252. Though this is the only direct mention of this site in relation to pilgrimage, it provides evidence of St Leonard's church as a place that would have been visited as part of these journeys.

Very little is known about pilgrimage to the sites of the female saints within Kent, and in the district this includes two significant figures. St Eanswythe of Folkestone and St Ethelburga of Lyminge were important individuals in the history of Christianity and are associated with two of the earliest monastic houses and churches within the county. It wouldn't be surprising if the sites at Lyminge and Folkestone were visited in pilgrimage, but unfortunately there is no evidence to confirm this. There is no further evidence for places of pilgrimage within the district as the shrines and sites visited were largely concentrated along the route of the Watling Street between Dover, Canterbury and London.

Reformation

The religious Reformation of the sixteenth century caused great upheaval throughout Catholic Europe. It was a defining event in British Christianity and is evident in the religious heritage of Kent. Most of the monastic houses and abbeys were dissolved, and many more were completely demolished. Church fittings were removed and many shrines or pilgrimage sites were either closed or destroyed. A number of the hospitals and alms houses associated with religious orders were also closed, though the secular houses were often retained. The churches did survive although their Catholic décor was removed and Protestant doctrines were adopted.

Throughout the District there is evidence of this religious upheaval. The Folkestone Priory was dissolved in 1535 and subsequently bestowed upon Edmund, Lord Clinton and Saye by Henry VIII. Horton Priory was dissolved a year later in 1536 and soon afterwards many of the associated monastic buildings were demolished with the western range being reused for secular dwellings. Remains of the priory do survive well today and much archaeological evidence survives of the original monastic site. St John's Commandery was suppressed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1541 and then leased to various families over the next few decades. As with Horton Priory, the chapel and hall survive well today and are under the care of English Heritage.

Some of the monastic houses in the district had already disappeared before the Reformation. In new Romney, there were two notable religious houses that no longer existed by the time of the dramatic events of the Dissolution. A small number of Franciscan Friars were living in New Romney for a short time during the later medieval period; however they remained for no longer then a single generation. In 1264, an alien Cistercian house had been established at New Romney and was a small cell of a few monks. The alien house survived into the Hundred Years War but was confiscated in 1439 and subsequently sold to the All Souls College in Oxford. The Lyminge Abbey had disappeared long before the Reformation during the tenth century when the remaining monks finally left following repeated Viking raids.

Of the hospitals, the two that had existed in New Romney were dissolved before the Reformation. The hospital of St Stephen and St Thomas was dissolved in 1481 and then St John the Baptist hospital in 1495. The hospitals in Hythe seem to survive beyond the Reformation although not much is known about their history during this time. St Andrews hospital appears to have been annexed by St Bartholomew's hospital during the early fourteenth century and there are records of St Bartholomew's acting as a hospital in 1685 until the twentieth century. St Johns in Hythe was established in 1546, during Edward VI's reign and the Reformation, and continued to operate as a hospital for the poor and those injured during warfare until the twentieth century.

Post-Reformation

Since the Reformation of the sixteenth century, a variety of non-conformist churches as well as the later return of Roman Catholic churches has developed within Kent. The emergence of non-Christian communities has also grown more recently; there is currently one mosque in Folkestone out of 34 across Kent.

Non-conformists or dissenters had existed long before the Reformation but it was not until the seventeenth century when they became widespread. Non-conformism was particularly common in East Kent. As an example, Lollardy had a number of supporters in New Romney and Snave during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Various religious sects begin to emerge in the seventeenth century including Presbyterian and Baptist groups. Following the Civil War 1642-51, Quaker meetings were also held at Lydd and Swingfield. By 1851, Methodism was also well established in the county.

A number of Victorian churches were built in the district during the nineteenth century. The Roman Catholic emancipation in 1829 followed by the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1849 led to the establishment of Catholic churches in Kent. One of the first permanent Catholic churches in the district was the Church of Our Lady in 1889, Folkestone. It had started life as a small chapel, but as Catholicism began to grow there was a need for a larger and permanent church. Although Catholicism forms a small part of the overall populations held religious beliefs, more Catholic churches were established across the district.

3. Description of the Heritage Assets

Churches and Chapels

There are 52 churches in the district listed in the Kent Historic Environment Record. Of these churches, 20 are Grade I Listed Buildings, 11 are Grade II* Listed Buildings and 11 are Grade II Listed Buildings. In addition to this, 4 sites are designated as Scheduled Monuments as well as Listed Buildings. The remaining 10 churches are classified as undesignated within the Kent Historic Environment Record primarily because remains of the buildings no longer exist or these churches are of a nineteenth century date.

The churches of Folkestone & Hythe District form a collection of significant religious heritage assets and clearly demonstrate Kent's important place in the history of Christianity beginning before the arrival of Augustine and his mission of conversion to Christianity in 597 AD through to the present day. The churches are of very high quality and significant archaeological remains of others can be found across the district. The vast majority of these sites are designated and therefore recognised as being nationally important. As well as this, varied forms are also represented although an overall Kentish type and conformity to general architectural principles of the relevant era can also be observed. Most of the churches to varying degrees have gone through phases of reconstruction and modernisation across the centuries, though outstanding remains from these earliest churches still survives either archaeologically or as incorporated into later constructions of some of the churches in the district. Notable examples include All Saints (Lydd) where Romano-British fabric survives and St Martin's (Cheriton) where Anglo-Saxon masonry can also be viewed incorporated into the current church building.

A number of the churches are also associated with various features that may or may not be designated such as churchyard walls, monuments, memorials and cemeteries. These are also significant as parts of the complete church setting.

The Lost Churches of the District

The lost churches of the district, primarily referring to the lost Romney Marsh churches, are a distinctive part of the religious heritage in this District. They fell into disrepair and disuse due to changing socio-economic factors, rural communities and parishes giving way to urban expansion and events such as coastal storms during the thirteenth century and the Black Death of 1348-1350. On the Romney Marsh, there have been up to 28 villages and parishes over the course of its history where there are now 17. Some of these lost villages include Blackmanstone, Broomhill, Hope and Midley. There are 8 lost churches on the Romney Marsh whose remains form an important part of the religious heritage assets in this area.

Many of these churches are mentioned in the Domesday Book and would have been Anglo-Saxon buildings. Remains of the Blackmanstone church no longer exists, and the Broomhill church is now only a pile of a few stones remaining at the site. There were 2 early churches in New Romney, St Lawrence and St Martins, as well as the present St Nicholas church that have since been lost due to a diminishing population during the sixteenth century though their believed sites are marked in the Kent Historic Environment Record. However, the standing remains of 3 of the lost churches are Scheduled Monuments as well as Listed Buildings and 1 is solely a Listed Building. The remains of Eastbridge church, Hope All Saints and Midley church are Grade II Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments. A church memorial that marks the site of the Orgarswick church is a Grade II Listed Building. These designations highlight the national importance of these sites as part of the story of Kent and the district. As mentioned above the Black Death, villages becoming deserted or being financially unable to maintain the churches caused the loss of these early churches on the Romney Marsh. The remains that are still standing constitute significant archaeological evidence for these early churches and they contribute to the distinctive character of the Romney Marsh landscape today.

Another notable example are the ruins of St Mary's church in West Hythe that are a Grade II Listed Building as well as a Scheduled Monument like the above.

Abbeys and Monasteries

Within the District, very little remains of the earliest monastic houses at Folkestone and Lyminge. The Folkestone Priory site was relocated and rebuilt in 1095 and 1137 due to the original sites being undermined by the sea and the earliest site having being raided by the Vikings during the ninth century. No remains of the earliest site survive, but a Norman doorway from the reconstructed priory can still be found in the present St Mary and St Eanswythe church. Any other remains are archaeological and do not survive above ground.

Lyminge Abbey also no longer survives above ground but extensive excavations have been done during the nineteenth century and more recently to explore the remains below ground that extend to the south and around the site of the current St Mary and St Ethelburga church.

At **Horton Priory** near Sellindge, most of the original monastic buildings have been lost following the priory's dissolution in 1536 and subsequent large scale demolition. The surviving fabric includes:

- Twelfth century standing remains of the western range (originally the prior's lodgings) that is a Grade I Listed Building and Scheduled Monument. Remodelling and additions were made to the main monastic building in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

- Attached ruined fragment of the western wall of the twelfth century church that is included as a Grade I Listed Building and Scheduled Monument.

- The remaining standing buildings are currently in use as private residences.

- Buried foundations exist for the church, main cloister, gatehouse, subsidiary cloister and monastic burial ground.

Little remains of the thirteenth century **New Romney Priory** established as a Cistercian house for monks of Pontigny:

- Small thirteenth century stone building of stone rubble with tiled roof, two storeys and three windows.

- To the north of the building a reconstructed wall made up of medieval stone.

These remains are both Grade II* Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments and are located on Ashford Road in New Romney.

The chapel and hall of **St Johns Commandery** or **Swingfield Preceptory** still survives as below:

- Grade II* Listed Building; Originally Thirteenth and sixteenth century with eighteenth and nineteenth century alterations where is was later used as a farmhouse. Mixed flint and stone building with stone quoins and dressings. The west gable end is tile-hung on both floors. The north elevation retains areas of render painted and scored to resemble red brick in Flemish bond. The roof is plain tiled.

The site at Swanton Lane in Swingfield is now under the care of English Heritage and is accessible to the public.

Hospitals and Alms Houses

The **Centuries House** or **St Bartholomew's hospital** survives in outstanding condition and is now divided into two private dwellings at 1 and 2 Bartholomew Street in Hythe. The original site of the St Bartholomew's hospital was established in Saltwood during the twelfth century and it is believed that the hospital transferred to Centuries house during the Seventeenth century where it then continued to be known as St Bartholomew's hospital. No evidence of the original site remains but the Centuries house includes the below:

- The building was first established in the thirteenth century and is a Grade II* Listed Building. It was later in the seventeenth century that the house was adapted as an alms house.

- The south east section is thirteenth century, possibly earlier.
- The south west section was built in 1330.
- The north east wing was added in 1811.
- The house includes medieval fittings including a gabled niche in the under croft and stone corbels.
- The house still retains eighteenth and early nineteenth century alms house fittings including an unusual folding screen in the communal room and a folding table. The individual rooms that were used as an alms house are still present.

There was also a St Andrew's hospital that was established during the fourteenth century in Hythe. Whilst there are no remains of this hospital, it is believed that it was annexed for the St Bartholomew's hospital and so ceased to exist as a separate establishment. It was however established by the same Hamo de Hethe whose birthplace was Centuries House.

The other hospital in Hythe at 150 High Street, **St John's hospital**, also survives:

- Grade II Listed Building founded in the fourteenth century but the building dates to the sixteenth century. It was later altered in 1802.

There were two hospitals at New Romney but unfortunately neither survives today. **St Stephen and St Thomas** was established in the fourteenth century and then dissolved in 1481. A map in the Magdalen College at Oxford dating to 1614 shows the hospital as standing on the west side of New Romney, near Appledore road. The field bounded by a track that is still known as Spitalfield Lane retains the approximate old boundary of the site. In 1955 the site was developed for new houses and so nothing survives of the original hospital. The second, **St John the Baptist hospital**, was also founded during the fourteenth century and was then dissolved in 1495. Again no remains of this site survive and the exact location of the hospital has been approximated and is not accurately known.

4. Statement of Significance

The religious heritage of the District provides valuable and unique evidence of a long and varied history of spirituality and Christianity in Kent. The first nunnery was founded in this District and some examples of the earliest churches are also present here. The religious heritage provides evidence dating back to the Anglo-Saxon era, with one notable example arguably exhibiting Romano-British religious architecture, and going through the Christian Conversion resulting from Augustine's mission in 597 AD to the medieval era, the Dissolution of the Monasteries, Reformation and finally up to modern and increasingly liberal religious practice of today. The religious institutions of the district have shaped and been shaped by the social, economic and cultural changes in Kentish society and constitute a significantly valuable source of

evidence that continues to tell the counties story. Many of the religious assets are designated for their national importance which further confirms the **outstanding value** of these religious assets.

Evidential Value

The religious assets within the District vary in form from standing buildings to ruins and then archaeological remains below ground. All of these remains together build a vivid picture of the religious landscape of Kent from Anglo-Saxon England through to the present day. Through them it is possible to chart the introduction, growth, evolution and liberalisation of Christianity in Kent. The relationship between church, state and society is also clearly illustrated where churches played a central role to local communities, often shaping the layout of settlements whilst also undertaking an important role in the local economy and spiritual wellbeing of its parishioners. A study of the changes in style and architecture over time can give a detailed insight into the priorities and resources available to the church as well as the evolution of religious beliefs and worship. Other religious assets such as monasteries and hospitals can lend further evidence for changing land ownership and use as well as social change in regards to poverty, health and welfare.

Historical Illustrative Value

The churches and their associated structures demonstrate the growth and influence of Christianity within the district as well as within the county. They illustrate the central role that religion played in Kentish life for a number of centuries as a dominant influencing factor within society. The richness of the religious assets give evidence for strongly held religious and social beliefs that played an important part in people's lives for much of Kent's recorded history. In particular, they highlight Kent's role as a gateway to Europe through which new cultural and spiritual ideas entered. The churches and monastic estates also reveal much about the relationship between church and state in addition to the changing fortunes of these institutions and the communities that they served. The story of Kent can be experienced through its religious assets and their evolution over time.

Historical Associative Value

The religious structures of Kent are associated with a number of defining events in Kent's history and the evolution of religious belief and practice. Some remains pre-date the Conversion to Christianity that began with the arrival of Augustine in 597 AD, providing some of the best evidence for early churches. Structures that are related to the first Christian kings of Kent are present at Folkestone and Lyminge followed by the early Norman churches after the Norman Conquest of 1066. The District arguably saw pilgrimage to the relics of female saints who are some of the earliest saints of Christendom after the Conversion. Devastating events such as the great storms of the thirteenth century and the Black Death of 1348-1350 took their toll on the religious and social landscape of Kent resulting in the distinctive ruins of lost churches and villages. The effects of the Reformation and Dissolution of the Monasteries can then be seen followed by the rapid decline of religion as a dominant influencing force in society. Nonetheless, through all of this the resilience of the church is also evident and again is significant to the story of religion in Kent.

Aesthetic Value

The District's religious buildings are of great aesthetic value. They constitute outstanding examples of Anglo-Saxon, Norman and medieval architecture that is valuable for its aesthetic properties as well as historical. Medieval churches in particular are among the architectural treasures of England and the district has a number of distinctive examples. The designation of primarily the older churches within the District demonstrates the aesthetic value of these nationally important religious structures and their various fittings and building fabric. Many of the churches provide a focus for the historical character of a village or town and stand out aesthetically. A number of the churches have been the subjects for artistic projects and studies, particularly the rural churches that boast some of the more iconic landscape settings in the District and county. The churches also act as local landmarks and there are a number of tours and walks that take in a number of these aesthetically attractive and distinctive structures and attract good numbers of visitors from locally and beyond.

Communal Value

The communal value of the district's churches is significant. Whilst the majority of the churches still act as spiritual centres for Christian worship, they also fulfil an important and active communal role. A number of the churches have active groups attached to them and a number of events, activities and projects are provided for the local communities and beyond. These churches are establishing themselves as cultural and spiritual hubs within their local communities and continuing to promote the church in this role as well as the significance of the church as a heritage asset, raising awareness, understanding and appreciation. The events and activities provided include musical concerts, art exhibitions, historical and archival research, social venues, art projects, archaeology projects and family facilities such as crèches and Sunday schools. These churches are also encouraging a strong sense of identity and ownership for its local communities and instilling a sense of pride in place. This is not only important for the social wellbeing of the local communities, but also for the improved mental wellbeing and general enjoyment by its residents.

5. Vulnerabilities

The religious heritage assets of the District are likely among the least vulnerable of the heritage assets explored in this strategy. The majority of the churches, chapels and other religious assets are designated as either Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and in some cases both meaning that they are afforded statutory protection and are very unlikely to come under threat. This protection is extended to the sites around the churches as well as the buildings themselves where in many cases structures such as churchyard walls and memorials are also protected by designation. Several of the District's religious assets also fall within Conservation Areas which is again significant for their preservation and longevity. Added to this, the churches of the district are greatly valued and enjoyed by their local communities who are very active in their upkeep and ongoing care. A number of initiatives have been established for the main purpose of preserving and maintaining the churches to which they are associated as cultural and spiritual hubs within the local communities. Many of the churches are actively used in communal activities, events and ongoing projects which further raises their profile and important place within the community.

However, there are still ways in which these assets are vulnerable which need to be recognised. There are issues with accessibility to some of the sites which not only restricts the number of visitors and people able to use the churches, but as a result limits the churches role as a communal hub or as part of the cultural offering in the district. Whilst churches must maintain their position as places primarily for spiritual worship, they must also evolve in order to survive and be active in their wider communal roles. Problems with accessibility include a lack of parking facilities or difficulty reaching the church by car or public transport; some churches particularly on the Romney Marsh are only reachable on foot. However, great care must be taken if improving access routes not to diminish the distinctive character of a church and its setting as well as the archaeological remains associated with its history normally being in close proximity. As mentioned above, particularly the churches on Romney Marsh are often in rural and isolated locations but it is this setting that is important to their distinctive and unique character and a delicate balance must be found.

There is also a lack of signage in some areas of the District to clearly highlight these churches and religious sites for local people and visitors to appreciate and enjoy. The religious heritage of the district is rich and historically significant but may be overlooked if signage does not clearly identify these sites. In some churches, there is also a need for improved amenities such as toilets, disabled access and perhaps ancillary buildings in order to provide better facilities for communal activities and events. However, as above, this again needs to be sympathetic to the fabric and character of the building and must be careful not to detract from the nature or sense of the place.

The location of some of the District's churches and other religious assets may also be a vulnerability. Some assets are in isolated or remote locations and so may suffer from criminal activity such as vandalism or theft. Other locations may cause problems such as flooding or other natural damage. Many of the churches are large historical buildings that will inevitably need a high level of maintenance and may even require specialist conservation work. The costs for this work have to be met by ever decreasing congregations and in a difficult economic climate. The ongoing maintenance and conservation of these assets could therefore be problematic. There are currently three churches on the *Heritage at Risk Register* within the district due to structural issues that highlight this as an ongoing vulnerability.

New developments may also pose a threat to the religious assets of the District. Housing and urban development is now occurring at a fast pace throughout the county, and there is a risk of encroachment onto the sites of churches and their associated features such as churchyards and monuments. Due to the designation of the majority of religious assets within the district, it is very unlikely that major encroachment onto church sites will occur. However, the setting is as important to the churches as the buildings themselves and contributes significantly to their distinctive characters and sense as spiritual places. The statutory protection afforded to these sites will limit the above, but this should also be a vulnerability to be aware of in the current climate of increasing development and growth.

6. Opportunities

The religious heritage assets within the district offer a number of important opportunities for its local communities and visitors from further afield. Many of the churches act as focus points within their communities and are highly visible within the townscape. They are active in providing a variety of communal events as well as offering a chance for people to connect with and better understand their heritage. A number of the churches have active groups dedicated to the preservation and maintenance of the church building as well as promoting communal activities and the church as a heritage asset. These communal projects present important opportunities for people to become involved in various activities and connect to their heritage through the church. These projects may directly relate to the church itself, or more widely to the village or town and encourage a better understanding of the local heritage. They will also promote the churches as not just being spiritual centres for Christian worship, but also as cultural and social hubs within the local communities.

Some examples include the Friends of St Leonard's Parish Church (Hythe) who are active in arranging a calendar of musical and cultural events held at the church throughout the year. These events support and promote musicians from Kent and London and in 2016 attracted around 1800 visitors to the concerts alone. Not only do these events raise funds for the upkeep of the church, but they bring people together and promote the church as a cultural and social hub. Similarly, the Friends of St Mary and St Eanswythe (Folkestone) hold a number of social events including art exhibitions and recitals by local musicians. Again these present important opportunities for people to engage not only with the church and its heritage, but with the community which is incredibly beneficial for the social wellbeing of its local people.

Further activities present educational opportunities and provide resources for learning and training. The 'Finding Eanswythe' project at the St Mary and St Eanswythe church as above will aim to improve the understanding and evidence for the Anglo-Saxon church and settlement at Folkestone as well as the Anglo-Saxon princess and patron saint of Folkestone, St Eanswythe. This will be a community project that will engage people locally and beyond and will encourage ownership of the local heritage by its participants. Training opportunities will also be available for archaeological fieldwork and research techniques throughout the programme. Not only is this an important opportunity for the communal role of the church and the social wellbeing of its community, but it offers opportunities for learning that may in turn ensure the longevity of this project and the heritage that it explores. Other groups such as the Friends of the Old Folkestone Cemetery aim to provide educational resources so that a better understanding can be developed of the religious and personal histories available through the religious heritage assets, and also to strengthen the connection between people and their heritage.

The archival material that many of the churches hold, or groups attached to the churches have built, provides excellent opportunities for community based research projects aimed at understanding the history of the local area. It also has benefits for individuals doing genealogical research into family members that may have been interred at the various churches and cemeteries. A number of the church groups have conducted detailed studies into the headstones and people buried which acts as an archive for family research. Several notable people have also been identified

buried at various cemeteries as well as people from significant events such as the World Wars that illustrate the areas important connections to great historical events.

A number of the churches also present opportunities for being part of tours or heritage trails. Many of the churches are aesthetically valuable as well as being historically important, and trails have been constructed to engage people with these sites. A trail that takes in the medieval churches of the Romney Marsh has been developed and the Canterbury Diocese is looking at creating a pilgrimage network between the churches of district more widely. Not only does this promote the churches and connect them to one another, but it presents opportunities to connect with the religious heritage and the landscape. This will have positive impacts on mental and physical health in addition to a better appreciation for the churches and other religious sites throughout the District.

There are further opportunities for the co-ordination between various active groups to create 'heritage packages' that take in a number of heritage assets across the District and enhance the cultural offering in the area. The pilgrimage network proposed by the Canterbury Diocese will achieve this, but there are also opportunities to link in with other heritage initiatives such as archaeological and military groups. The 'Finding Eanswythe' project will explore the religious and archaeological heritage of Anglo-Saxon Folkestone and so co-ordination between the relevant groups can work to enhance the foundations and impact of the project. The Friends of the Old Folkestone Cemetery work closely with military heritage groups around Folkestone as many people buried at the cemetery were victims of warfare from the Napoleonic through to the World Wars. This again is an important opportunity for joint working where expertise can be shared and so the heritage will have a greater impact.

7. Current Activities

There are a number of initiatives relating to the religious assets of the district currently active within the area. These groups are doing important work not only to promote and preserve the various religious structures across the District, but also in providing a dynamic communal role for the local communities and visitors. Some of these groups and their current activities have been discussed in the section above, and there are more to add to these making for an active and dynamic network of current activity.

As has already been mentioned, the Friends of St Leonards Church (Hythe) and the Friends of St Mary and St Eanswythe (Folkestone) are active in their goals to preserve and maintain the church buildings in addition to fulfilling dynamic communal roles. Community events such as music concerts and art exhibitions not only bring people together and encourage them to engage with their heritage, but they also promote the churches as cultural and social hubs. Volunteers and churchwardens at St Peter's church in Folkestone are currently running two community events; the creation of a time capsule that the community are encouraged to contribute to, and a heritage mosaic that again members of the public are encouraged to engage with and submit ideas that will reflect the fishing heritage of Folkestone in a mosaic. This is an important example of how these groups are encouraging community involvement as well as a better understanding and relationship to the local heritage through the churches.

Other groups such as the Romney Marsh Historic Churches Trust and the Friends of St Nicholas Church (New Romney) continue to promote the churches as valuable heritage assets and work to maintain and preserve these structures as important parts of the local communities. The Friends of St Nicholas Church (Newington) are responsible for, with funding given by the Roger de Haan Charitable Trust, the improvement of facilities at the church that the lack of had meant a previously limited communal role. New toilets and a kitchen area were added as well as a 'social area' so that social events such as talks and concerts were better provided with amenities and could attract wider audiences. Again this is important work that actively enhances the communal role of the churches within the district.

As has already been mentioned, the Friends of the Old Folkestone Cemetery are active in their promotion and maintenance of the Old Folkestone Cemetery and are seeking to create links with other heritage initiatives to provide 'heritage packages' that may help to better connect people to more of their local heritage. They also work to clear and maintain the cemetery making it a site for peaceful contemplation and commemoration. The group have hopes to create a memorial space to commemorate those lost in the Gotha Bombings of 1917, this year being 100 years since the event. A number of the bombings victims are buried at the cemetery and so work is being done on creating this commemorative space. This is important not only as a religious asset, but also as a significant part of Folkestone and the District's history as being on the frontline during the Napoleonic and two World Wars.

The IMOS Foundation is also doing important work with the ruins of the Hope All Saints church on the Romney Marsh. The ruins are now owned by the Foundations Director and there are plans to develop the site into a type of 'Heritage Park' that will highlight this religious asset and promote its historical significance. It will also provide an educational resource and connect people more closely with their religious heritage. Examples include incorporating casts of the original church bells into the ruins, the bells now being at St Nicholas in New Romney. Wooden sculptures are also planned to form a boundary around the site, and the female saints will be represented again to highlight the significant religious heritage that this church is a part of.
Recently a Green Pilgrimage project has been approved by Interreg Europe and will build on previous success of pilgrimage tourism across Europe. Kent Downs will work with 6 partners from Kent (Diocese of Canterbury, Norfolk, Sweden, Norway, Romania and Italy and focus on the North Downs, Pilgrims Way and the Via Francigena. The 5 year project will identify how the economic benefits of pilgrimage tourism can benefit the natural and historic environment through investment, partnership working and policy prioritisation. This is important for the district as it highlights the value of pilgrimage tourism and supports the forthcoming project by the Canterbury Diocese that will look to create a pilgrimage network between the churches of the District.

In 2007, the Romney Marsh Living Landscape Partnership (RMLL) began discussing in detail issues around the biodiversity, landscape-scale conservation and sustainable land management practices on the Romney Marsh. As a result, the RMLL have sought funding to deliver a number of projects for the enhancement of the Marsh for its people and wildlife. As a part of this, the Romney Marsh *Fifth*

Continent Landscape Partnership Scheme is now facilitating the restoration and enhancement of the built, natural and cultural heritage on the Romney Marsh. It is recognised that the churches on the Marsh play an important role in the local character and so are the focus of two projects as part of the *Fifth Continent* scheme. Within the wide and flat landscape of the Romney Marsh, the churches are distinctive and highly visible features that have shaped settlement patters and been focal points for the communities that they serve for many centuries. Whilst some have been the subject of artwork and others have been studied in detail by local heritage groups, others are still in need of further research.

The first project to focus on the Romney Marsh churches is called *Sentinels of the Marsh 1* and will constitute a historical surveys project. A team of volunteers will study in detail the relationship between the churches and the Romney Marsh landscape whilst working with the local communities to further research both the standing and lost churches. The site where St Martin's church in New Romney was believed to have stood will be investigated in detail through archaeological excavation in an attempt to define the boundaries and surrounding structures associated with the church. A legacy group will also continue to study and promote the churches beyond this initial programme of research.

The second project is called *Sentinels of the Marsh 2* and will look at reutilising the churches as community hubs as well as restoring them as tourist attractions. Churches often lie at the heart of the community and have done for many years, and so it is hoped that this important role can be resurrected for the Romney Marsh churches where this has faded over time, particularly with the continued reduction in regular congregations and secular society. The project will again utilise volunteers who will work with local stakeholders to ensure that the churches are open to the public and regularly used as community spaces. As part of the project, tasks such as new interpretation materials, church and wildlife gardening projects and the development of a heritage tourism package will also be goals for this work. Both of these projects are significant in restoring the communal role of the churches as well as gaining a better understanding of their history and again placing them at the centre of the tourism offering of this area. Whilst society is becoming increasingly secular, churches are still able to play important roles within their local communities and continue to be appreciated as valuable heritage assets.

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