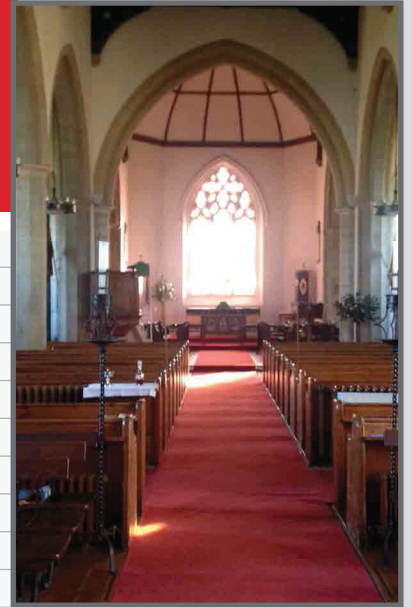


COMMUNITY GRANT St Mary the Virgin, Sutton Valence, Kent



Address:	Chart Road, Sutton Valence, Maidstone, Kent, ME17 3AW
Denomination:	Anglican
NCT grants awarded:	NCT £10,000 Community Grant, June 2016
Setting:	Rural
Architect:	Paul Sharrock AABC of Thomas Ford and Partners
Contractors:	Riverside Construction Co Ltd
Project cost:	£80,301
Opening hours:	Open daily from 10am until dusk
Visitors in 2017:	2,000
Website:	www.handschurches.org/churches/sutton-valence-church

A church has served the village of Sutton Valence and the wider community in times of disaster and celebration since the thirteenth century. The original St Mary's church was built of ragstone, and mentioned in the Domesday Book, but the current Grade II listed church dates to 1825, rebuilt within the original footstep of the earlier church and with further restoration in 1874. The Lambe Chapel, dated to 1519, was preserved from the earlier church and remains in the south east corner.

The village needed a Mother and Baby/Toddler Group which the church hoped to be able to provide. There was also a wish to run coffee mornings, and also be able to welcome walkers and researchers into the church. However, the lack of a toilet precluded its ambitions.

The church proposed to install a disabled toilet with baby changing facilities in an area where there was an outdated kitchen, and a new small kitchen at the rear of the church. The designs were intended to help the installations blend in with existing storage areas, with bifold doors to hide the units when not in use.

Project challenges: Having no existing mains drainage. This was solved by the architect and contractor designing a trench arch system.



Impact:

- Benefits to the church: the new kitchen area has provided a lovely welcoming social area at the rear of church; having a toilet encourages people to remain after services to socialise.
- Benefits to the community: the church now has facilities to support a mother and toddler group.
- Benefits to heritage: it looks good and there is real pride in the congregation.

Key lessons learnt:

1. Having a great architect and builder was vital. Research carefully before appointment, look at examples of their work, and interview them to ensure a 'meeting of minds'.
2. Having a project leader was essential for day to day organisation and to be the link between the architect and builder, keeping clear, single lines of communication.
3. A nominated and accepted Fundraiser was vital to keep fundraising moving forward both locally and with Trust Bids.
4. Keeping the congregation informed and involved constantly with photographs and visuals, such as a fundraising barometer, increased enthusiasm for the project.

New uses: More concerts, Thursday Mother and Toddler Group, and a monthly Messy Church.

New users: Kent Police Choir, Mother and Toddler Group, Messy Church, larger congregations for special services as more elderly people can access the church.

"The National Churches Trust grant made all of the difference to our fund raising, both from the monetary value and the feeling of recognition and encouragement by the Trust ... and it was a great incentive to other funders to support us."