



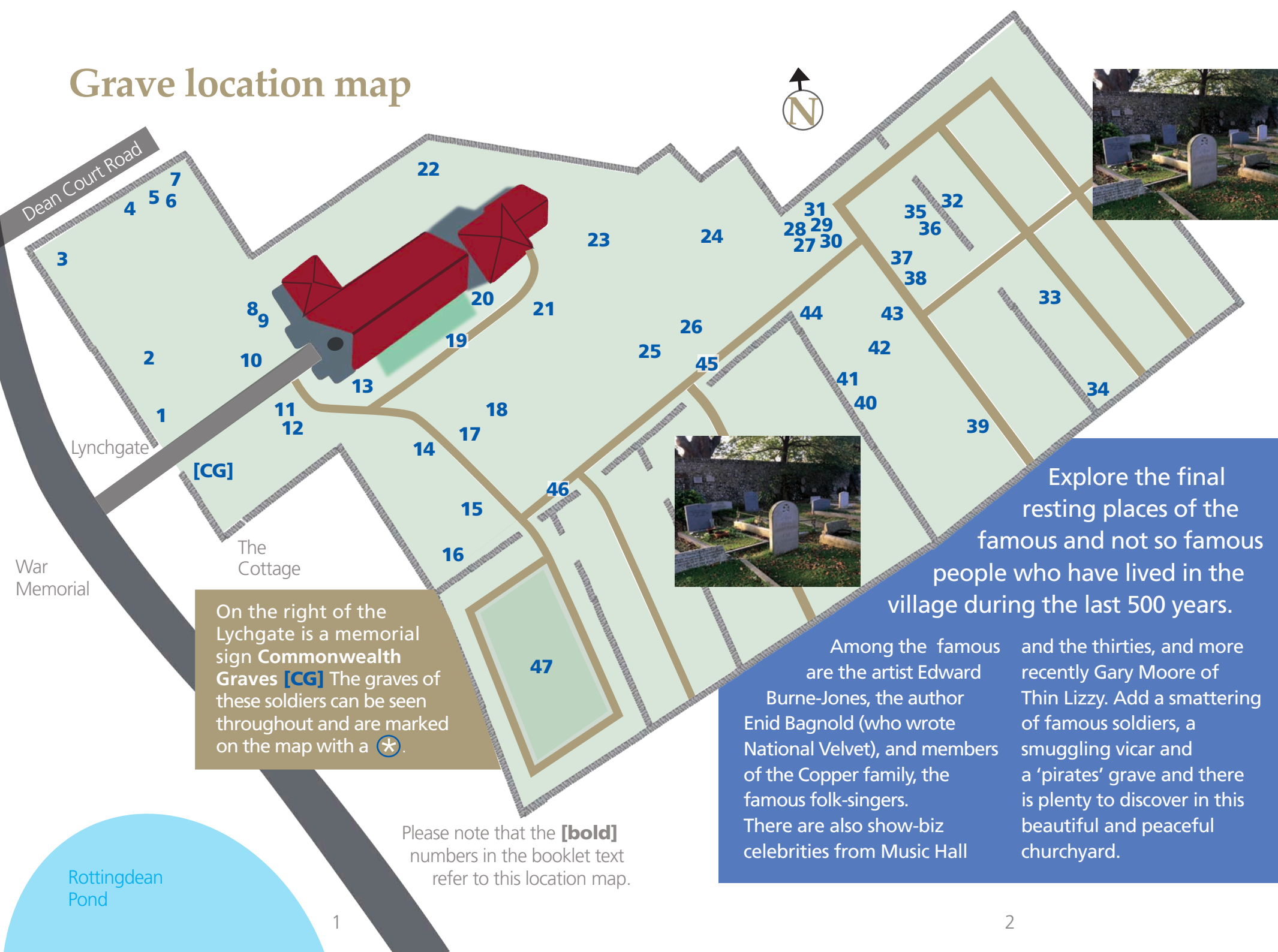
# Churchyard guide




**50 Memorials to explore**

**by Mike Laslett**

# Grave location map



On the right of the Lynchgate is a memorial sign **Commonwealth Graves [CG]** The graves of these soldiers can be seen throughout and are marked on the map with a .

Please note that the **[bold]** numbers in the booklet text refer to this location map.

Explore the final resting places of the famous and not so famous people who have lived in the village during the last 500 years.

Among the famous are the artist Edward Burne-Jones, the author Enid Bagnold (who wrote National Velvet), and members of the Copper family, the famous folk-singers. There are also show-biz celebrities from Music Hall

and the thirties, and more recently Gary Moore of Thin Lizzy. Add a smattering of famous soldiers, a smuggling vicar and a 'pirates' grave and there is plenty to discover in this beautiful and peaceful churchyard.

Rottingdean Pond

## Enter the churchyard through the Lychgate.

To your left is the **Ridsdale family tomb [1]** placed opposite The Dene, where they had lived since the property ceased to be Lord St Vincent's racing stables in 1877. Edward Ridsdale is noted as having held the office of Chief Assayer at The Royal Mint in The Tower of London. Equally important is the marriage of his

daughter Lucy to Stanley Baldwin, who was three times Prime Minister during the Twentieth Century. Baldwin was a cousin of Rudyard Kipling since his mother Louisa was a sister to both Alice Kipling and Georgiana Burne-Jones. It was the connection with the Burne-Jones family that brought both the Kipling and Baldwin families to visit Rottingdean for family occasions.



The fourth grave in the fourth row from the street is that of **William (Trunky) Thomas [2]**. He can be seen on the right in the picture, operating the bathing machines circa 1895, as recounted in Angela Thirkell's book 'Three Houses.' Living at Tallboys, he owned livestock housed opposite Hillside, operated the four bathing machines and was considered the last smuggler in the village. His son, Frederick Thomas, ran the Royal Oak and the horse-drawn bus that ran from there.

The next two headstones sadly commemorate people who died in tragic circumstances. **Robert Page [3]** died after being hit by a football at the age of 14. A Celtic cross commemorates **Thomas Avery Brooker [4]** who was struck by lightning at Brighton Races while waiting for a passenger in his fly. Behind his grave is that of **William Saxby [5]** the joint master of the Hunt with Charles Beard for thirty-five years from 1834 to 1869. At the angular tomb to your right is **John Funnell [6]** who looked after the Hounds before being succeeded by his third son, Edmund, pictured below here.



Another serviceman, **Major General Sir Evan Gibb DSO [9]** has his distinguished career marked by a law enforcement vessel based in Gibraltar named after him.

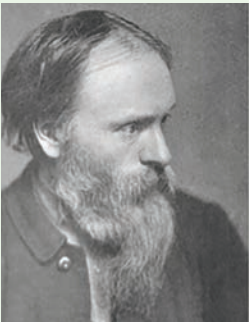
In the corner is the vault of the **Beard Family [7]**. The Beards were the largest landowners in the area during the 17th Century but is important to understand that most of them were Quakers and are buried in the nearby Quaker Burial Ground. Nicholas Beard spent nearly five years of his life in prison for his non-conformist activities.

In front of the church is **Lt. Thomas Hope RN [8]** who was in command of the schooner HMS Pincher which sank in 1838 with the loss of all hands. His body was washed ashore at Roedean.

By the path, **Samuel Thacker [10]** was an architect who lived at Norton House. He designed Rottingdean School (since demolished,) altered Norton House and designed the Lychgate through which you entered.

To the right of the path are the vaults of two eminent people; **William Black [11]** the novelist and **Lady Carson [12]** wife of Sir Edward Carson of Northgate House. As a barrister Sir Edward successfully prosecuted Oscar Wilde and as a politician he became Solicitor General.

Ahead of you, two plaques on the SW buttress of the church mark the internment of the ashes of both **Sir Edward Burne-Jones and his wife, Georgiana [13]**. He had carefully selected this spot as it looked across to his home, North End House. Those attending the internment included his wife and children and his nephews, Rudyard Kipling and Stanley Baldwin. Floral tributes were sent by Ruskin and Swinburne. On the following day, a memorial service was held in Westminster Abbey, the first time an artist had been honoured in this way. His granddaughter, author **Angela Thirkell**, is also here but the wooden leaping board marking her ashes has, at her request, been left to disappear over time.



Follow the path to your right to the first tomb on your right. Most burials in the churchyard are of humbler folk. Eight members of the **Wood family** are buried in a family tomb **[14]** including Elizabeth Wood, who died aged 103 years and 9 months!

So many members of the folk singing **Copper family** have individual headstones that this part of the churchyard is known as 'Copper Corner **[15]**' Bob Copper (below left), whose fame travelled the world, immortalised village life at the beginning of the 20th century in the book 'A Life For All Seasons'.



There are some sad deaths in any churchyard but none more so than the death in 1808 of 10-year old **James Walker [16]** who while following his master on the road between Brighton and Rottingdean was unfortunately killed by falling with his horse off

the cliff. His headstone is three rows in front of the tool shed. Return to the Wood family tomb and view the grave opposite.



Rottingdean schoolchildren have been taken to see the "Pirate's Grave" for many decades. In fact, poor **John Norris [17]** was no more a pirate than you or I. The simple explanation for the skull and crossbones is that in the second half of the 18th Century it was traditional to show symbols of death such as the skull and crossbones, an hourglass showing time running out or a skeletal Grim Reaper with a scythe. The Victorians introduced more hopeful symbols such as winged angels, bouquets and classical images. Crosses were considered popish and not reintroduced until about 1850.

Immediately behind is one of the oldest memorials; the tomb of **William Savage [18]** who was vicar from 1569 until his death in 1619. The story is told that after the church service in 1588 he led his flock down to the beach to pray for the defeat of the Spanish Armada!

Close to the church wall are several rare old double headstones such as that of **Richard and Elizabeth Knight [19]** who died in 1725 and 1726 respectively. These stones have a vertical division with one spouse on the left side and the other on the right.

At this point note that the level of the churchyard is higher than the church. This is due to centuries of burials raising the soil level.

A cross below the Church tower marks another long serving Vicar, **The Reverend Arthur Thomas [20]** was buried in 1895 after 47 years' service. It was his son that **Thomas Brooker [4]** had taken to races on that fateful day when he was struck by lightning.

Similar to the so called 'Pirate's Grave' is the small

mid-18th Century headstone of **Henry Matthews [21]** which has an hourglass running out of time.



Behind the East End of the Church is a memorial to **four crew of HMS Eurydice [22]** which sank off the Isle of Wight in 1878. It was one of the worst peacetime disasters after the wooden training ship capsized during a sudden snowstorm. Only two of the 319 crew survived and sail training ceased. The loss of the Eurydice is the subject of poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The event was witnessed by many in Ventnor, including the young Winston Churchill. Various ghost stories abound, including from Prince Edward, who claims to have seen the ghostly image of the ship while filming in 1998.

At this point you can look over the wall to Tudor Close or due south to William Nicholson's studio. Head towards the gap in the wall.

A hero of the Crimean War, **John Henley, [23]** pictured centre in our cover picture, died peacefully in Rottingdean in 1903.

Life was not so kind to **Hannah Spain [24]** who was buried under the second tree on your left in 1869 with six of her children, none of whom survived beyond their first year.

**James Snudden [25]** was Chief Coastguard at Portobello, Telscombe. A row of coastguard cottages stands north of the A259 Coast Road, while his cottage on the south side is now The Smugglers' Rest Public House. A cross below a third tree marks the resting place of **Stephen Welfare [26]** and his family. He ran the original White Horse Public House, whose horse-drawn bus competed with that of the Royal Oak.

The largest tomb ahead of you belongs to **William Brown, [27]** the last landowning farmer who lived at Challoners.

**Robert Lang [28]** was Headmaster of St Aubyn's Preparatory School from 1940 when the school relocated to North Wales for the War until he retired in 1974.

Next to him are the two flat slabs of **Enid Bagnold [29]** who lived at North End House (once the home of the Burne-Jones family) and her husband, **Sir Roderick Jones, [30]** the Chairman of Reuters news agency. Their garden inspired her play "The Chalk Garden" which became a hit on Broadway and The West End. It was subsequently made into a film starring John and Hayley Mills, Edith Evans and Deborah Kerr in 1964. Better known was her 1935 story "National Velvet." It was filmed in 1944 with a young Elizabeth Taylor, who was to remain Enid's life-long friend.



On the wall is a memorial to her brother, **Major Ralph Bagnold** [31] founder of the Long Range Desert Group during World War II, which was a precursor of the SAS.

Go through the gap in the wall and turn right. Walk to the 17th grave which is that of shepherd **Steve Barrow** [32] (photo right). Whenever Rudyard Kipling appeared in the bar he would refuse to perform any songs, in the belief that Kipling would sell them to the Americans.

On your left, after the gap in the wall you can find the memorial to **James Leonard Avery** [33] who worked at Hilder's butchers. Against the wall, almost in the corner, you will find **Sir George Lewis** [34] who lived at The Grange and was responsible for employing Lutyens and Jeykyl to remodel the house and gardens in the nineteen twenties.

Return through the top gap in the wall to inspect the graves along that wall. **Nimrod Ping** [35] was a local architect, politician and gay activist. One of his designs was Lewes Road Sainsbury's which has arches which recall the demolished



railway viaduct. The epitaph on his stone reads "Architect, musician and troublemaker. Arrived late, left too early."

**Gary Moore** [36] of Thin Lizzy, Skid Row and other groups has probably more visitors than any other grave (photo right). He sadly died of a heart attack in his sleep at the age of 58 while five times over the drink drive limit. A Northern Irish singer/songwriter, he was also a virtuoso rock and blues guitarist.



Return to the central path for **David Hennessey** [37] the last local coastguard pictured right. When he retired he became a driver for the Thomas family.

**Nelson Stenning** [38] was the village baker. Angela Thirkell describes the excellence of his buns in her book 'Three Houses.' His son, Ernie Stenning, was the last village blacksmith and is pictured above at the village Forge.



### **The SS Tycho [39]**

was a merchant ship with a crew of 33 belonging to the Ellerman Wilson Line, on its way from Bombay to Hull. On 20 May 1917 it was sunk by the U-boat UB40, which sank 99 ships during its service. The crew took to the lifeboats with no casualties. Against Admiralty regulations, the SS Porthkerry came to rescue the survivors and was herself sunk by the UB40. This resulted in 5 of her crew and 15 from the Tycho being killed, including the Masters of both vessels. Again, breaking Admiralty rules, the SS Esperanto picked up the survivors who were brought to Newhaven. Both wrecks lay 16 miles off Newhaven. The grave here contains a War Graves Commission memorial as do two graves opposite.

**Cormell Price [40]** was a school fellow of Burne-Jones and was Kipling's Headmaster when at the United Services College, Westward Ho! and they remained great friends.



**Henry Alled [41]** was a modest veteran of the Crimean War, who lived in poverty in a shilling a week cottage in The High Street. This may explain why he has no headstone, his grave marked by railings surrounding a bush. It was therefore a shock to all when a troop of Life Guards appeared in the village in 1909 to bear his coffin to St Margaret's Church for a military burial.

In the Thirties, **Jimmy Noon MBE[42]** and his brother were an accordion duo, The Capaldi Brothers. He was a popular Redcoat at Butlin's Ocean Hotel in Saltdean, where he played the organ to the age of 84!

**John Commin [43]** was for many years Chairman of the Rottingdean Preservation Society and on his headstone, you can see a depiction of the Windmill he helped to restore.



A Celtic cross on the corner marks **Henry Mason [44]** Headmaster of the now demolished Rottingdean School. The card illustrated bears his signature.



Turn the corner, following the wall. At this point you have a wonderful view of The Windmill.

Before the first gap in the wall is a memorial to **Jerry Jobsey [45]** who was one of many Canadian soldiers in the area during WWII who stayed and married an English girl. His wife Pat had been a Land Army girl and remembers picking sprouts in the snow at Falmer.

Just after the next gap in the wall is a memorial to **Cecil D'Oyly-John [46]** who claimed to be the illegitimate son of Augustus John. A Rottingdean artist, he was brought up in South Africa. After WWII he became renowned for his sun drenched Mediterranean landscapes, some of which were bought by The Queen Mother.



There is no individual memorial to view but in the Garden of Rest lie the ashes of **Charles and Dorothy Neville** [47] who developed the coast from Peacehaven to here.



I suggest that you finish your tour in the church to view the famous **Burne-Jones windows** and the fire damaged red stone from the Tower used in Gilbert Scott's Victorian restoration of the building and to view yet more memorials!



In front of the altar lies a black slab marking the burial place of **The Reverend Thomas Pelling** [48] Vicar from 1698 to 1732. He was a relatively wealthy, well-bred, man who organised the parish well.

On the south wall is a memorial to **Conrad Betts** [49] who sadly drowned at Saltdean in 1912. The tragedy deepened because it also records that three of his fellow students from Gonville & Caius College drowned in their gallant attempt to save him.

On the opposite side of the church is a monumental tribute to **The Reverend Dr Hooker**, 1762-1838 [50] priest, schoolmaster, smuggler, Master of the Hunt, musician and Country Gentleman. A separate leaflet about his life is available In the Church.



Much of this information is from records held in the Archive of the Rottingdean Preservation Society, held in The Grange Museum.

The Society is a local charity which maintains the Windmill, as well as The Grange Museum and Gallery and supports many other activities in the village.

# Welcome



It is perhaps appropriate that this tour of our beautiful churchyard ends inside the church building itself.

Please feel at home in this ancient building which has stood for centuries as a monument to the activities, creativity and hard work of many generations of villagers, as well as being a house of prayer. It continues to be loved and cherished by the residents of Rottingdean, whether they consider themselves churchgoers or not. It is their church and is seen as a spiritual home to those who live here now or have moved away, and to others who have found themselves here and make return visits.

There is a very active worshipping community at St Margaret's, and we thank you for being our most recent visitor. As well as celebrating services throughout the week, we are engaged with the local community and seek to serve the people of the village and those who are in need in the nearby city of Brighton where, in certain areas, we see some of the greatest social deprivation in the UK.

That's hard to imagine when standing in the silence of this holy house, but it is so, and we play our part in alleviating the plight of those in need.

While you are here, do take some time to enjoy the tranquility of this place, to reflect, say a prayer, or even climb the steps to light a candle in front of the high altar. That is what this place is for. If you are able to join us, we would love to see you on a Sunday morning at 10.00, or at any of our services throughout the week. You'll find our service times in The Lookout bulletin on the table as you leave, on notices in the porch or on our website: [www.stmargaret.org.uk](http://www.stmargaret.org.uk)

Thank you for being here today.  
May God bless you as you continue on life's journey.

**Fr Anthony Moore,**  
Vicar of Rottingdean