

St. Mary's and St. Nicholas the parish church of Leatherhead.



The church probably came into existence in the 11th century and then was part of the manor of Thorncroft. This accounts for it being remote from the centre of Leatherhead (at the crossroads) and also built on high ground away from the river Mole flood plain.

The Nave and Transept were present during the 13th century with chancel being added 1320. The 15th century saw the north and south aisles added together with the tower which is offset so that a public right of way was not interrupted (or so it is said). There is a small circular staircase in the tower leading to a narrow balcony on the north side. The Victorians added the vestry areas to the north and south. The walls of the church being of "pudding-stone"- a mixture of flint and other stones bound together with lime cement.

In its earlier years the church was "empty" in that no seating was available for worshippers. During the 18th century box pews were added for the comfort of the congregation but later removed by the Victorians. There is very little original stained glass in the glass as it was "modernised" around 1720. There is a very interesting double squint in the transept to allow a bell ringer a view from the chancel to the high altar was possible. In those days a bell was rung for the Sanctus and Elevation of the Host.

The church has some interesting artefacts, two of which are the 13th chest to the left of the altar and another large leather studded one which came from Slyfield Manor has is dated 1663.

The church has a complete set of 10 bells in the tower. These were cast between 1816 and 1924. The churchyard is apparently one of the largest in the south of England with over 2000 graves. One of the most notable being that of Abraham Dixon, the 19th/20th benefactor who built and owned Cherkley Court and also built the Institute for the town.

The current electoral role is 221 with attendances on Sunday being 15 to 20 at the 8am communion, around 100 for the 10.30am service and 20 for evensong at 6.30pm.

David Wall

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