

**ST MARY AND ST NICHOLAS, LEATHERHEAD**  
Church Trail – Answers and Notes for Accompanying Adults



**1. PORCH**



- There are 6 lions. The lions on this tombstone are rampant, which means they are shown standing up and in profile with the back paw on the ground. Two or sometimes three paws are raised ready to strike and the tail is erect. (See example.)  
Heraldry developed from the need to identify knights in armour following the growth of medieval tournaments from the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Coats of arms were used in the Crusades and on other battlefields. Women also had coats of arms, but as they did not go to war, their arms were shown on a lozenge with ribbons at the top rather than on a shield.

**2. WAR MEMORIAL**

- The 1914-1918 War, also known as The Great War or The First World War.
- Poppies were the first flowers to bloom again on the battlefields of Northern France after the 1914-18 War and became the symbol of remembrance for people killed in all wars. Wreaths and poppies are put on war memorials on the anniversary of the Armistice on 11 November 1918 (at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month) when fighting ceased.
- There are 7 flags: 5 for the British Legion, one Union Flag and one for St John Ambulance.

**3. FONT**

- A large bowl, usually stone with a lead lining, which holds the water in which people are baptised as a sign that they have become members of the Church. This font dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> century.  
Lids were compulsory from 1236 as water was kept in the font after it was blessed at Easter and needed protecting from theft as it could be used in charms and magic rituals.\*  
\* *'How to Read a Church' by Richard Taylor.*  
Nowadays water is usually blessed on the day of the baptism.



**4. NAVE AND ARCADE**



- The roof looks like an upturned ship. The English word 'navigation' also comes from 'navis'.
- The carving on the capital of the column in the North Aisle near the pulpit is a good example of "stiff-leaf" carving. This was often done as a thanksgiving by the mason.



**5. TOWER**

- There are many initials and dates. The clearest are **Richard Rogers** and **Jasper Rogers**, 1685 and 1772. In 1795 the West Door was widened so that the town's horse drawn fire engine could be kept in the tower.
- The Curtain was embroidered in 1981 by the women of the parish. It shows most of the organisations and notable buildings in 20<sup>th</sup> century Leatherhead. There is a separate leaflet explaining them.

**6. PEWS AND PULPIT**

- Correctly these are benches as pews have doors, but this distinction is now usually ignored. Earlier box pews were replaced with these benches in 1873. Previously families would have paid for pews and would spend more to sit closer to the pulpit. The sermon is given from the pulpit so everyone can see and hear easily. A three tier wooden pulpit was installed in 1761, replaced with a stone one in 1873 and this oak pulpit in 1962.
- The colour of the cloth on the pulpit changes as the seasons of the Church's year are marked by using different colours for the priest's vestments, altar frontals and other hangings.  
White/Gold for festivals, Christmas, Easter, Patron Saints.  
Purple for Advent (the 4 weeks before Christmas) and Lent (the 40 days before Easter).  
Red for Pentecost, also called Whitsun (the coming of the Holy Spirit) and Martyrs.  
Green for all other periods (known as Ordinary Time).



**7. ARCHWAY**

- The pictures show the story of the Annunciation when the Angel Gabriel told Mary she would have a son and call him Jesus.
- A shell was worn by medieval pilgrims in their hats as a symbol of pilgrimage. It is the attribute of St James the Great who was the Patron Saint of pilgrims. Only a mason who had been on a pilgrimage (eg to Canterbury) could carve a shell.

**8. LECTERN**

- The bird is an eagle. A wooden or brass lectern holds the large Bible from which the lessons are read. It is shaped like an eagle with outspread wings, because eagles are thought to be the birds which can fly the highest and so nearest to the heavens. The eagle is often standing on a sphere which represents the world.

**9. FUNERAL HELMET**

- It is the head of a goat  
This 400 year old funeral helmet belonged to an eminent courtier. Robert Gardiner of Thorncroft Manor was Chief Serjeant of Queen Elizabeth I's wine cellar. It was carried on his coffin at his funeral in 1571.

**10. LADY CHAPEL**

- In each of the small panels above the main picture of Lazarus are symbols representing the four evangelists who wrote the four gospels of the New Testament in the Bible. Each has a symbol and the first three often have wings added.



St Matthew - a man



St Mark - a lion

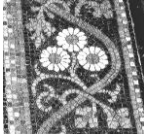


St Luke - an ox



St John - an eagle

**11. SEDILIA AND PISCINA**



The marble and mosaic floor of the Chancel was laid in 1891.

**SEDILIA** are low seats cut into the wall to the south of the altar for those assisting in the Service. These were built in 1230 when the Chancel was extended.

**PISCINA** This is an arched niche near the altar with a basin and a drain going straight into the ground for rinsing the communion vessels.

**12. ALTAR**

**IHS/ihc** IHS is a diminution of the Greek word **ΙΗΣΟΥΣ** meaning JESU.

In Greek capitals it is **ΙΗΣ**. In Greek lower case it is **ιησ**. Over many years the letters have been changed to our alphabet. **ΙΗΣ** has become **IHS** and **ιησ** has become **ihc**.


It is known as THE SACRED MONOGRAM and the letters are often superimposed.



**13. ALTAR MOSAICS OF ST MARY AND ST NICHOLAS**

- Mary is holding a Lily (also known as a fleur-de-lys) the flower of the Virgin Mary and a book. No one knows what the Saints actually looked like. To help those people who could not read to recognise them in windows or statues, artists would show something that was associated with the story of the Saint.
- St Nicholas is also known as Santa Claus or Father Christmas. The golden balls refer to the gold he gave to three poor sisters as a dowry. According to tradition he left gifts for poor children. His feast day is 6<sup>th</sup> December which is celebrated in some countries but many people exchange gifts on 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> December (Christmas Eve or Christmas Day).  
The mosaics are 'opus sectile' meaning 'cut work'. Panels like this were made by James Powell and Sons from specially made shaped glass tiles with a design painted on the surface. The painting allowed more detail to be shown in a smaller space with the durability of traditional mosaic.

**14. CHURCH CHEST**

-  The Church chest has three locks for greater security and the three different keys were held separately by the Vicar and two Churchwardens. It was used to store valuable Church vestments and treasures. The chest dates from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Domesday Book required all Churches to have these solid oak chests and the penalty for stealing from them was severe.



**15. DOUBLE SQUINT**

- This opening in the wall allowed the priest at a side altar to see the priest at the high altar and avoid elevating the host (raising the holy bread) which is the central part of the Mass, before the Parish priest. At the elevation a small bell was rung. In the early 14<sup>th</sup> century the Chancel was extended a further 14 feet, so another squint had to be cut to line up with the new position of the altar. A 'double squint' is most unusual.

**16. ORGAN**

- The low notes are made by the largest pipes.  
This organ was originally made by Thomas Parker in 1776. Unlike organs made after this date it does not have a pedal keyboard. Purchased in 1843 from a Church in Watford, it was dismantled in 1873 and the best bits stored. These were rediscovered after a serious fire in the Church in 1989. Thanks to the great generosity of the Heritage Lottery Fund with the balance of the money donated by the Friends of Leatherhead Parish Church, the organ was restored in 2007. It now has an electric blower but originally the bellows would have been blown by pumping the wooden handles up and down, which was very hard work. You can hear the organ at some services or at concerts.