

## St Leonards Chesham Bois

Welcome to our ancient church and we hope you enjoy looking around. We have highlighted below a few items of particular interest for you to look at, so please take your time as you wander around the church.

### A brief look at our past

St Leonards was originally a private chapel built in c 1200 near to the old Manor House of William de Bois. Its first incumbent was William de Risemberghe in 1215 (the year of Magna Carta). The original 13<sup>th</sup> century chapel was quite small, made of local flints & chalk dressings, and has over time become the chancel area of the church you see now. The present chancel arch replaces a smaller 13<sup>th</sup> century one, the stones of which can still be seen at the churchyard entrance. Over time, the church has been enlarged & modernised. A bell tower once stood where the car park is now and, at one stage, an upper gallery existed; both of these were removed as part of a late Victorian major refurbishment. The present vestry was built in 1911 and further vestry additions (Birkett Room) followed in 1955 & 1969. The East End was reordered in 2001.

The Cheyne family became the first Lords of the Manor in 1445, remaining so until 1728. During this time they were responsible for all the church expenses!

## Things to look out for in the Chancel.....

- **East End window** – with its 3 pointed lancets, the window was restored in 1948 following air raid damage in Oct 1940. The restoration used a combination of original and new glass pieces
- **Sir John Cheyne's Tomb** (d1585) - has a top of Verona marble, sides of clunch display panelwork and the Cheyne family coat of arms
- **Marble Wall Tablet (Seraphine)** – presented in 1835 by the surviving pupils of Rev Thomas Clarke (Rector 1766 -1793) who he had trained for the Ministry at Chesham Bois
- **Communion Table** – dating from the reign of Queen Anne (late 17<sup>th</sup> century) and made of oak. The communion rails are Jacobean, having been part of the old gallery which was removed in 1881. The panelling behind the Table was put up in 1967
- **Chancel windows** – whilst these retain their early 13<sup>th</sup> century arches, much of the glass is modern
- **Chrysm Child** – a tiny brass of Benedict Lee, a “Chrysm Child” (i.e. buried wrapped in his baptismal cloth) who died in 1542, and who was the infant grandson of Robert & Elizabeth Cheyne. A picture of this brass can be found on one of the chancel window sills. It is believed to be the only brass in England known to have the word “chrysm” contained in the inscription. The brass itself has been removed offsite for safekeeping

## Along the South Wall.....

- **17<sup>th</sup> century Cromwellian Hour Glass** – the odd-looking iron bracket on the south wall originally contained an hour glass so that the preacher's sermons could be timed to perfection!

- **Incumbents' Board** – located to the rear of the South Wall, this shows all incumbents from 1215 to date. There is a break of about 100 years between 1418 & 1521 for which no records have yet been found. It is likely that Mr Whitby (1650) was a Presbyterian or Independent Minister placed here by Cromwell's officers in charge of the parish

## Along the North Aisle.....

- **Jacobean Pulpit** – hexagonal in shape, made of carved oak panels from the original 15<sup>th</sup> century pews & now standing in the old organ loft. It was restored in 2002

- **Lectern** – 20<sup>th</sup> century, oak wood carved in the shape of an eagle

- **Font** – a 20<sup>th</sup> century replacement for a marble font given in 1882 by the Rector of St Mary's, Amersham which sadly cracked

- **North Aisle** – four 14<sup>th</sup> century windows were reset from the former north wall when the church was enlarged and the North Aisle added in 1881 (extended 1911) The quatrefoils above the windows show the implements of the Crucifixion. The window at the back of the aisle, adjacent to the rear door, depicts both St Leonard & St Hugh of Lincoln. Chesham Bois was part of the Diocese of Lincoln until its transfer to the Diocese of Oxford in 1845

## Now look up.....

- **Roof** – the painted stone corbels of the chancel, and of the eastern part of the nave, date from the 15<sup>th</sup> century as do the moulded arch trusses

## On your way out.....

- **Oak entrance doors** – these were hung in memory of Rev George Lawrence, Rector 1923-45. He was responsible for building the Parish Centre, Glebe Way in 1937

- **Bells** – the tower carries 3 bells which are rung by just one person (one bell rope on each arm & a leg stirrup! The tenor bell was given in remembrance of 2 children killed during WW2, one in Chesham Bois, the other in Germany. The other two bells are much older, one undated and the other being dated 1705 and inscribed “Chandler made me” by the Chandler brothers who had a bell foundry in Drayton Parslow, near Winslow, Bucks

We hope you have enjoyed your perambulation around the church – why not now wander around the churchyard..... can you spot the old hand water pump?