

St John the Baptist

Crowthorne



The Parish of St John's is in Sonning Deanery in the Archdeaconry of Berkshire in the Diocese of Oxford.

Before 1866 Crowthorne was a tiny hamlet which increased in size after Wellington College and Broadmoor were built. Until then the spiritual needs of the inhabitants were catered for as part of the Parish of Sandhurst. In 1866, the Sandhurst curate, Rev. Henry Lenny was sent on Sunday evenings to give "Cottage Lectures", which gradually became services. The first such was on December 2nd 1866 (1st Sunday in Advent), taking place above a bakery and reached by a ladder (Victorian Ladies in crinolines?). By February 1868 the use of Broadmoor schoolroom was offered.

In July that year a Mr L Gower offered a building as a temporary church to be erected on land where the Fire Station now is, and it was opened on Sunday 13th September 1868. Because it was only temporary it was never consecrated or even dedicated, which made selling it 4 and a half years later much simpler. It was eventually moved, on rollers, across the High Street to its present site. Today it is a cafe called "The Rolling Feast".

In 1869 a Mrs Gibson of Sandhurst Lodge offered a piece of land for the site of a new brick-built church. Mr Arthur Bloomfield, a London architect, had been approached to submit plans for a church for 300 worshippers at a cost of £3000 and Mr James Pither of Sunninghill was employed as builder. The church of St John the Baptist was consecrated by the Bishop of Oxford on May 5th 1873.

The 1st Vicar was the aforementioned Rev Henry Lenny, from Sandhurst. The east window of the church, as well as the recreation ground and Morgan Centre are named after the 2nd Vicar, Rev Henry Morgan, who commenced his duties in 1884. He found that most pews were allocated, their rental cost at the time being between 5 and 10 shillings per year, depending on location.

Three Crowthorne men who took part in and survived the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava are buried in the churchyard.

The church organ, made by Henry Speechly & Sons, was installed in 1882 and refurbished in 2016. The East window was installed in 1894. The only major alteration to the Church is the Hall, which was added in 1968. It is actually attached to the main building and is able to become an extension to the Church. However, although the electoral roll is 174, average Sunday attendance is 81.