

Leatherhead & District Local History Society

Potted Histories No 35

Thorncroft Manor, Leatherhead



Thorncroft Bridge c: 1905



Thorncroft Manor c: 1910

The recorded history of Thorncroft Manor begins with reference to it in the Domesday Survey of 1086. In 1266 Lord Phillip Bassett and his wife Ela, Countess of Warwick gave the manor to Walter de Merton and so began the long association of Thorncroft with Merton College, which Walter de Merton had recently founded at Oxford. It is evident that a manor house has stood on the present site for over 1,000 years, the original building surviving into Tudor times before being largely rebuilt in 1497. In 1772 it was demolished and replaced with the Georgian manor we see today.

In the Victorian period there were as many as half a dozen leaseholders of Thorncroft Manor. 1837, Colonel Drinkwater Bethune acquired the lease from Merton College, Oxford. He was the author of a military classic *The Siege of Gibraltar* and in 1839 his daughter published a long poem about the River Mole. The house passed first to Alexander Colvin, an East Indian agent and then 1863 to A.A. Collyer Bristow. There was yet another tenant, Mrs Knight, in the early 1870s, but by 1878 it was taken over by Susan, the widowed Marchioness of Cholmondeley, and daughter of the Duke of Beaufort. She lived there until her death in 1886. The next tenant was James Giles but by the late 1890s it was a private school in the hands of Walter Lawrence; he sublet part of the estate to Miss Emily Moore of the Swan Hotel Leatherhead. Arthur Tritton JP, who lived at The Priory nearby, bought the freehold from Merton College in 1904, ending Thorncroft's association with the College which had lasted over 600 years.

During World War II the Candian Army occupied the premises. From 1962 to 1970 it was home to St Christopher's boarding school for girls. In 1971 Howard Humphreys & Son, Consulting Engineers acquired the building. Today it is home to Halcyon Offices Ltd.

Goff Powell - Extracted from *History of Leatherhead* by Edwina Vardey with additions

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