

Leatherhead & District Local History Society
Potted Histories No 30
The Crescent Cinema - Church Street - Leatherhead



The Crescent Cinema built on the site of the old Manor House opened in 1939 with a seating capacity of 1,282. It was equipped with a Hammond illuminated console electronic organ. The cinema had a stage 30 feet deep, with two dressing rooms provided and the proscenium was 40 feet wide.

It was run by a local family - Mr H.G. Prickett was the manager. Like most cinemas in their heyday, it offered real value for money - The adverts - a short 'B' film followed by a cartoon, the news reel, forthcoming attractions. Whilst during the interval the usherettes would be selling cigarettes and ice creams. Then at long last the 'Main feature film'. It was also used for stage shows featuring local and international performers. The Cinema was closed in around 1967 and bingo was tried out, but wasn't successful and the building was sold to the local council. In 1969, architect Roderick Ham made great alterations, to the stage end, the frontage and also the auditorium, re-opening as the Thorndike Theatre. The auditorium now had a bare brick finish and 530 seats and is considered one of the best theatre designs of its time.

In 1995 the Thorndike Theatre began screening films as well as live performances, but the management company went bankrupt and the theatre closed in mid-1997. At the end of 1997, it was taken over by Screen Works to become a 180 seat cinema, using only the rear seating area, but this was a short lived venture. It then was used by religious groups for meetings. Re-named Leatherhead Theatre, it re-opened in 2001. The main auditorium now has 512 seats and there is a studio theatre seating 80 and a 40 seat conference room. The building was designated a Grade II Listed building in 1999.

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For information regarding Membership, Lectures and Museum opening hours

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