



About St George's

St George's is a rare example of a village church of the Tudor, Stuart and Hanoverian periods. It was rebuilt in the 1540s, replacing a previous building on this site, and is one of the first churches to have been built after the Reformation. Visible from the outside, three Tudor window embrasures, a bricked-up priest's door and the wooden clock-turret remain.

Few other changes were made to the structure for two centuries except for a series of alterations to accommodate changing liturgical fashions. The classical chamber pew was designed in 1725 by Sir John Vanbrugh, and the growing population of Esher necessitated the building of the north aisle, two more galleries and a vestry.

St George's was the parish church of Esher until 1854.

There are historical connections between the church and residents of the nearby Claremont Estate. Thomas Pelham, Duke of Newcastle; the Princess Charlotte, heir to the throne; her husband Leopold, first King of the Belgians; his niece the young Princess Victoria, and later as Queen with Prince Albert and their family – all worshipped here.

The church building is now in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust. The Friends of St George's Church, a registered Charity, was established in 1986 to assist in maintaining the church and to use it for suitable purposes. It is now the venue for St George's Arts, supported by the Friends of St George's Church in partnership with The Churches Conservation Trust and the RC Sherriff Trust.

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Access

Due to their age, historic church floors can be uneven and worn, and lighting can be low level. Please take care, especially in wet weather when floors can be slippery.

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Church of St George

Esher, Surrey



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- 1 One **Gothic window** survives; the others date from 1725.
- 2 The roof is supported on the **Tudor tie** and **collar beams**.
- 3 A fine George II **royal arms**, undated but probably contemporary with the remodelling of the church early in his reign.



- 4 **Funeral hatchments** display the arms of the deceased painted on canvas. Three, of 1831, 1835 and 1883, relate to the Spicers of Esher Place and one (undated) to Thomas Chapman.

- 5 The **chamber pew** with Corinthian columns was designed by Vanbrugh in 1725 for Thomas, Duke of Newcastle, Prime Minister and owner of Claremont. He shared it with his brother, Henry Pelham of Esher Place. Thereafter, it was used by the owners of both estates. Occupants included the Princess Charlotte and Prince Leopold and the future Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

- 6 The marble **memorial** to Elizabeth Hervey, first wife of Charles Ellis, is by John Flaxman. Charles had inherited a large Jamaican sugar plantation. He served as an MP from 1796 until 1829 and opposed every measure to end the slave trade. He bought Claremont in 1802. Widowed in 1803, he was later to marry the widow of Nelson's Captain Hardy.

- 7 The original **dedication crosses**, uncovered in 1996, can be seen on the walls.

- 8 The panels of the **oak reredos** date from 1794.

- 9 The 17th-century **pine altar rails** are in the arrangement decreed by William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury 1633–45.

- 10 An interesting **ledger stone** marks the grave of Christopher Gore who inherited Sandon (Sandown) farm in 1635.



- 11 The **memorial** of oil on wood is to Lady Vere Lynch. She married Sir Thomas Lynch (see No. 14) in 1670, and in Jamaica she designed and encouraged the local carving of tortoiseshell wig combs. Returning to England Lynch purchased Esher Place in 1677. During the return voyage to Jamaica in 1681, Lady Vere and her son Charles, aged 10, became ill and died in Madeira. Their bodies now rest here beneath the altar.

- 12 The baroque **memorial** with pomegranates and cherubs is to Mary Fowler by Sir Henry Cheere (1761).



- 13 The early-18th-century **triple-decker pulpit** has a bottom tier for the parish clerk, the middle for the rector and the top for the preacher.

- 14 The plaque on the **west gallery** commemorates Sir Thomas Lynch, a successful planter and sugar manufacturer who first introduced cane sugar to Britain. He was created Governor of Jamaica in 1671 and purchased Esher Place in 1689.



- 15 The north aisle with **ship's spar pillars** was built by John de Ponthieu in 1812. Memorials placed high on the walls illustrate Esher's association with the Napoleonic Wars.

- 16 The **monument to the Princess Charlotte**, given to the church by the Duchess of Albany in 1910, was commissioned by Queen Victoria from Francis John Williamson, her favourite sculptor, who lived in Esher. Charlotte lies on her

deathbed; her husband, Prince Leopold, watches. The central panel depicts the couple giving alms to the Esher poor (cover) and on the right Leopold accepts the crown of the Belgians while Britannia looks on. Only child of the future George IV, Charlotte was heir to the throne. After her death in 1817, as there were no legitimate heirs, George's brother (Duke of Kent) married Leopold's sister, Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, and in 1819 the future Queen Victoria was born.

- 17 **Memorial to Philip Spicer** of Esher Place, who, baptised in this church in 1818, shared the Newcastle pew with the young Princess Victoria. Aged 14, he joined the Royal Navy as midshipman. In 1837 he was involved in the capture of a slave ship off the Bahamas. Many died of smallpox but the surviving slaves were later declared free. Philip died on the passage home, aged 19.



- 18 Two 19th-century **paintings** hang above; *Salvator Mundi* by Sir Robert Kerr Porter and *Apotheosis* by Arthur William Devis.

- 19 The 1540 **Tudor building** forms the nave and chancel of the current church. It is built of soft limestone with brick quoins and a stone and plain tiled roof. The wall treatment varies and includes areas of stone and flint set in a chequerboard pattern.