**Chapels in the present-day churchyard**

The present church is the third on this site, though the two earlier ones had the status of "chapels of ease". They were used for communion, but baptisms, marriages and burials were conducted at Shipton-under-Wychwood.

The origins of the first chapel on this site are uncertain. It is not mentioned in the Taxatio Ecclesiasticus of 1291, but there are references to it from the mid-fifteenth century. In 1458 Thomas Wylkes, a hermit, left a vestment to the chapel of "le feilde". The 1547 survey records that "the said village of Feld do hold of the Lord of the Manor of Shipton aforesaid a certain chapel and pay yearly for a chief [rent] 4d". Nothing is known about the appearance of this first chapel, but it must have been very small for it had only 150 sittings (the present church has 500 sittings).

In 1822 the old chapel was rebuilt and enlarged under the direction of George Groves, architect, using some of the stone from the first chapel. An old photograph of the 1822 chapel shows that the windows in the north wall were of a different style from the smart new west end and it may be that the old chapel was only partially rebuilt. The new chapel was a simple rectangular building. All the glazing appears to have been plain and the only apparent exterior decoration a carved quatrefoil above the west door. A bell-cote, containing a single bell, with a weather vane atop was at the west end of the roof. All that is known of the interior is that it had a gallery: a present day villager recalls having been told in the 1940's by a man then about 90 of the excellent sport he enjoyed there as a child playing with his pea-shooter during services. This chapel in turn was demolished when the present church was built in 1859.

**A medieval hermitage**

Probably the earliest ecclesiastical establishment in Leafield was the medieval hermitage, in the area of the village then known as "Luvebir" or "Loueburie". This name can be recognised as the modern-day Lowborough, but the hermitage was probably not in what is now the grounds of Lowborough House. It was more likely on the site of the pair of cottages in Purrants Lane, which contain substantial elements of medieval masonry.

This hermitage was first referred to in 1232, when it was occupied by a hermit named Ernald. In 1270 the hermitage was given by the King to the Hospital of St. John in Lechlade. By 1364 it had changed status to a chapel for the use of the King's Foresters from Wychwood Forest, though complaints were made that the Prior of St. John had refused to find a chaplain for the chapel "to the serious prejudice of the King and the injury of the foresters of the forest". The chapel had probably fallen into disuse by the time the Hospital of St. John was dissolved in 1472.

**Non-conformism in Leafield**

At one time there were both a Primitive Methodist Chapel and a Baptist Chapel in Leafield. The Methodist Chapel was on the eastern side of Witney lane showing parish room, formerly the Methodist Chapel -  Witney Lane, but it did not flourish for long. In 1891 the chapel was conveyed to the Vicar and Churchwardens to be used for Church of England purposes under the control of the Vicar. It was converted into a Parish Reading Room, but by 1956 it had fallen into disrepair and the PCC decided to sell it, thereby raising £200 for church funds. It is now a private house, the only sign of its earlier use being a line of stones in the shape of an arch on the front.

The Baptist Chapel, built in 1873, was on the south side of the Shipton Road, diagonally across from the village shop. In the years following, the attendance gradually increased to a point at which a gallery had to be added to accommodate the large congregation. The nearby Manse and Schoolroom at the top of Lowborough Ridings was the residence of the Minister. In July 1899 Leafield and Burford united as one church with the Minister serving both chapels. When J.W. Manning was welcomed as Pastor on 18 April 1929 100 people were present. The chapel continued in use until the mid 1990s, often being hired out to the village playgroup and other meetings when not in use for services. The congregation gradually declined, so the chapel was closed and was later sold for conversion to a house.