

# Heritage Assessment of the Pews in St Michaels Church Cropthorne Pershore WR10 3LU

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The Consultants

**Rock- Davidson Associates.**

Consultants: **Louisa Davidson** MA [Dist] HistEnvCons BA(Hons) **IHBC** and **Jacob Rock** MA PGDip[Dist] HistEnvCons PGCE

### 1.2 The Brief

Assessment and significance of pews in the west end corner of St Michael's Church, Crothorne including an onsite survey inspection/photographs/assessment of fabric/ historical analysis and desk based research including a visit to the Worcester Record Office at The Hive.

### 1.3 Background Heritage Assessments of Significance

Heritage statements/assessments should ideally be prepared by an appropriate professional with the necessary expertise to properly assess the heritage asset and its significance. For buildings or sites of high significance [e.g. for nationally designated heritage assets/listed buildings] it is recommended that the statement be prepared by an architectural historian, an accredited conservation architect, accredited heritage consultants or qualified archaeologist

### 1.4 Methodology

This is a desk and web based assessment using books, and appropriate websites. Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology records were examined in the time frame allowed for this assessment. An onsite survey inspection was carried out. This assessment has been commissioned by the PCC to help inform the DAC on a proposal but is not an analysis of any proposed new works or the impact. A Schedule of Works and Impact Assessment should be carried out taking into account the findings from this heritage assessment.

### 1.5 Limitations

No lifting of floor coverings was undertaken.

### 1.6 Copyright

Rock Davidson Associates shall retain full copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other project documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved; excepting that it hereby provides permission to the client and the DAC for the use of the report by the client and the DAC relating to any planning matters and to use the documentation for their statutory functions and to provide copies of it to third parties as an incidental to such functions. This document has been prepared for the stated purpose in accordance with the Agreement under which our services were commissioned and should not be used for any other purpose without the prior written consent of RDA. No Liability to third parties is accepted for advice and statements made in this report. The facts contained within are written to the best of our knowledge with resources available. All photographs by RDA unless otherwise stated.

## 2 The Site & Constraints

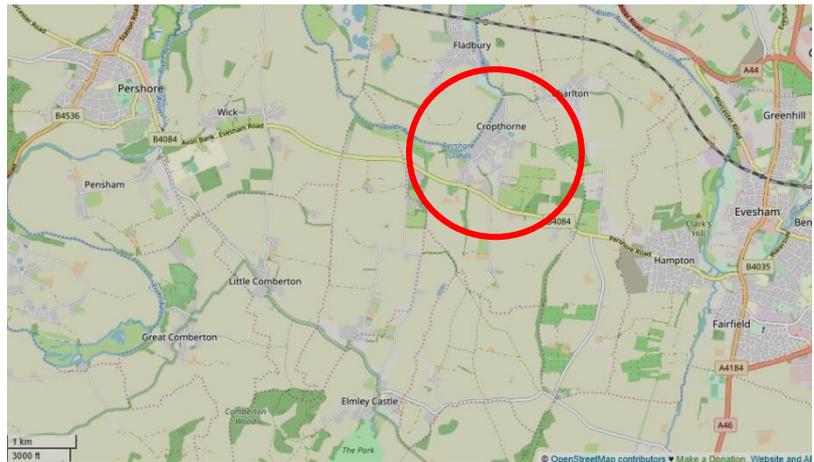


St Michaels Church Crophorne

### 2.1 Location



St Michaels Church Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.



Crophorne Village between Pershore and Evesham

## 2.2 Church of St Michael Listed Building Description

The listed text for the Church is very short and should be updated. It currently reads as follows:-

Heritage Category: Listed Building Grade: I

List Entry Number: 1116923 Date first listed: 11-Feb-1965

Statutory Address: Church of St Michael, Crothorne

SP 04 NW 648/11/249 CROPTHORNE Church of St Michael 11.02.65

I Norman to Perpendicular. Aisled, clerestoried nave with late C12 arcades, south porch and west tower with C15 top. Chancel rebuilt in 1894. Contains C9 Cross and C17 monuments. Fragment of wall painting over arcade. Listing NGR: SP0001145132

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1116923>

## 2.3 Brief History of St Michaels Church

A more detailed description of the church was found online at Victorian County History written in 1913. The church does also have its own visitors guide that draws on a lot of the information cited below.

“The church of ST. MICHAEL consists of a chancel about 34 ft. by 14½ft., nave 47 ft. by the same width, north and south aisles 9½ ft. and 9 ft. wide respectively, south porch, and a western tower 11 ft. square. These measurements are all internal. The earliest portion of the present building was begun about the year 1100, and appears to have been a rebuilding of an earlier structure, beginning with the north arcade and aisle, followed soon afterwards by those on the south side. About 1170 the chancel arch was inserted, and a few years later the tower added, the chancel being rebuilt and widened about 1200. The church stood thus, with chancel, nave with narrow aisles, and west tower, till the middle of the 14th century, when the chancel was again rebuilt and the nave aisles widened.

Late in the 15th century the church seems to have been much altered, and it is not improbable, from the character of the bases, that the north arcade was then rebuilt with the old stones before the clearstory was added. The tower also was raised to its present height, with the intention of adding a spire, but the last work was never carried out. The south porch seems to be the work of a later date, probably with older materials, and in the 18th century the north range of clearstory windows was renewed in the 'churchwarden' style of the time. In 1894 the chancel was rebuilt with the old materials, and the church also underwent restorations in 1900 and 1903, and a further one has lately been completed.” ‘Parishes: Crothorne’, in *A History of the County of Worcester: Volume 3* (London, 1913), pp. 322-329. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/worcs/vol3/pp322-329> [accessed 8 October 2019].

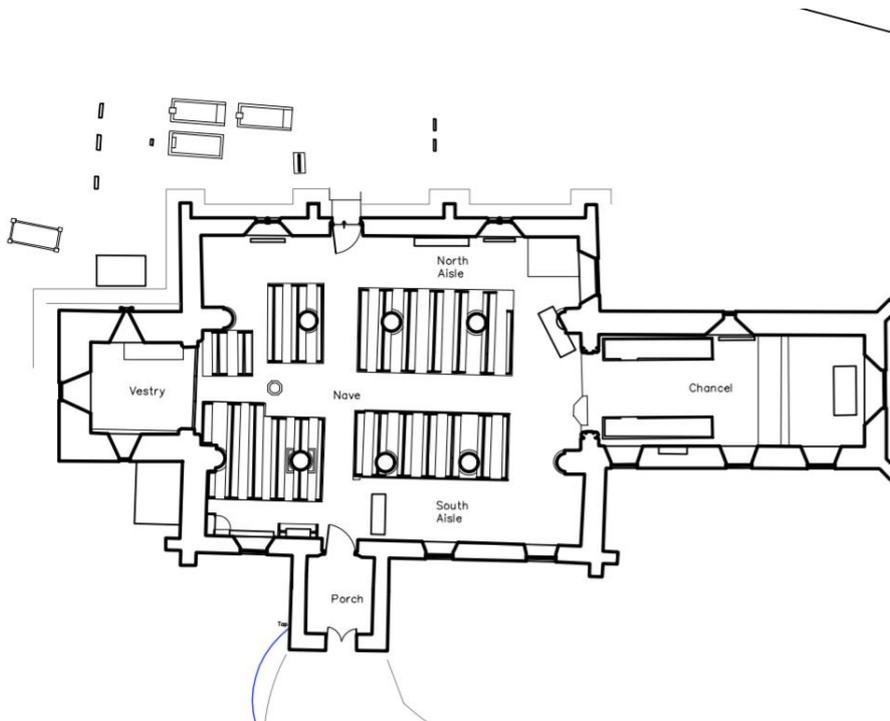
## INTERIOR

“The chancel has a modern open timbered roof, while the nave and aisles have plastered ceilings. The font is also modern. **Some of the traceried bench ends and front and back panelling to the nave seats date from the 15th century.**

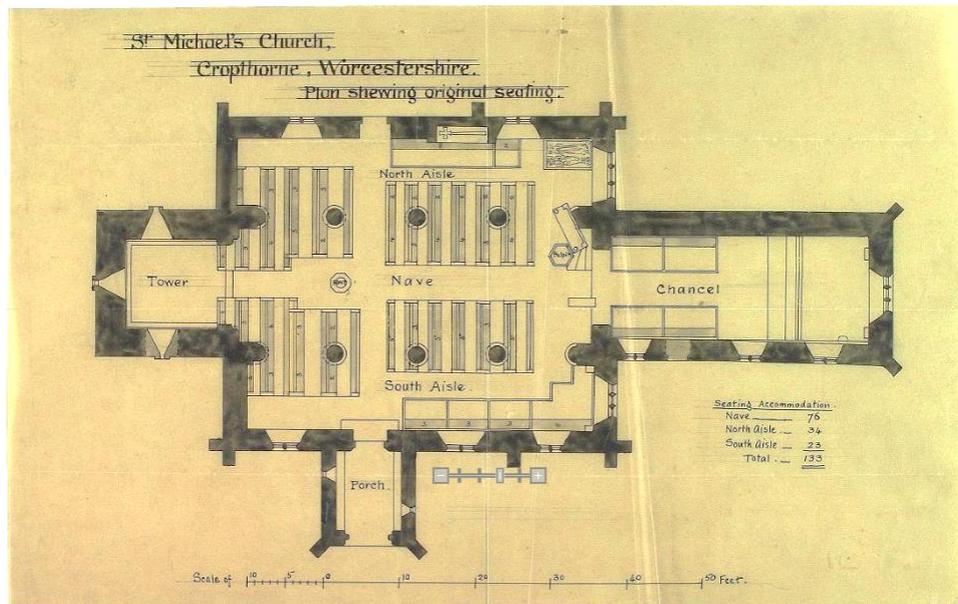
There are several large tombs in the church. The most prominent, to Edward Dineley, 1646, is placed asked in the first bay of the north arcade, and is of Renaissance design, with kneeling figures under a flat canopy, supported on marble columns of the Corinthian order. On the front face of the base are the kneeling figures of four sons and three daughters in high relief. Above the canopy is a cleft pediment with a shield bearing the Dineley arms impaling those of his wife. The pedestals at the angles also support shields. The tomb is evidently not in its original position, and was probably removed from the chancel. At the east end of the north aisle is another alter tomb to Francis Dineley, died 1624, with recumbent effigies of a man and woman, the former in armour. On the base are the kneeling figures of nine sons and seven daughters, and cradles for three children, who died in infancy. In the north wall, to the west of the first windows, is a 14th-century tomb recess with a flattened ogee arch, enriched with ball flowers. The arch springs from square blocks of stone supported on carved corbels, and at the apex is a human head. In the recess is an ancient slab carved with a long round-headed cross, a hand and a chalice, but it is apparently not in the original position. There are many other slabs of 18th-century date and other modern wall monuments.

'Parishes: Crothorne', in *A History of the County of Worcester: Volume 3* (London, 1913), pp. 322-329. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/worcs/vol3/pp322-329> [accessed 8 October 2019].

## 2.4 Church Plans



St Michaels Church Interior current layout Plan courtesy Caroe & Partners Architects 2019



1896 St Michaels Church showing original seating much the same as it is today by Jethro Cossins. Image Courtesy Lambeth Palace Church Plans ICBS09938 CROPTHORNE, St. Michael. The same ground plan by Jethro Cossins is in the Worcester Archives [BA 3008 ] dated 1892 drawing no 2676

In 2019 the pew seating remains unchanged apart from NW corner where two pews were removed to accommodate the organ in the 1930s.[BA 3008 26-11-1932] Box pews were removed from the chancel when it was rebuilt together with removal of box pews in the south aisle and north aisle. [See Primary Sources.]

### 3 Assessment of the Pews in St Michaels Church Crothorne

#### 3.1 Brief Historical Background of Pews in Churches

Generally through most of the Middle Ages the laity stood in the nave when not kneeling. Any seating would have been low and narrow stone ledges around the walls of naves and broader low ledges around the bases of some piers. Portable stools were used until at least the late 14<sup>th</sup> century when in response to a number and the length of sermons fixed benches or pews became more widespread, many churches being furnished with them during the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and continuing across the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The dates of the earliest sets of fixed benches or pews are difficult to assess. The period at which benches and pews come widespread is easier to determine because prevalent in the 15<sup>th</sup> century because documents of a kind refer to seating survive. Problems of dating pews also exist in relation to 16<sup>th</sup> century whether they were erected before or after the Reformation. Blocks of seats were often provided by individual donors. Boxed pews were a later design of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and would have been owned by local gentry and families.



15th Century Pews GD 1 St Mary, Haddenham - East end [cc-by-sa/2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/) - © [John Salmon](https://www.geograph.org.uk/p/3267004) - [geograph.org.uk/p/3267004](https://www.geograph.org.uk/p/3267004)



Box Pews at St. Cewydd's church, Disserth, Powys [cc-by-sa/2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/) - © [Derek Voller](https://www.geograph.org.uk/p/5169737) - [geograph.org.uk/p/5169737](https://www.geograph.org.uk/p/5169737)

### 3.1.1 Pew Design

Pews were often, as seen in St Michaels Cropthorne, set on platforms. Medieval examples of pewing, the original floor, a solid floor will still be present. The pew itself being independent with the bottom timber rail set on and above the floor finish. [Ref Pews Benches & Chairs 2011 Pg 367] “Elsewhere, particularly when work on the seats was part of a large-scale late-fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century refurbishment or rebuilding, seats were supplied throughout at one time, as at Bodmin, where the 1491 contract for new seats stipulates that they should be in four ranges throughout all the body of the church, those in the nave 12 and 1/2 feet long, those in the aisles 7 feet..” [Ref Pews Benches & Chairs 2011 pg78] It would appear the pews at St Michaels were constructed and supplied at the same time.

The pew platforms have kerbs – the edges act as a base to the pew ends into which they are tenoned. This is evident in the pews in St Michaels [See Section 3.4]

Raised kerbs and platforms can present problems if the pews are taken out. Changing the pattern can have serious results. Introduction of solid in-situ concrete in place of suspended timber floors can trap moisture and force water up the walls or arcade piers leading to accelerated decay in plaster and Masonry. The platforms themselves have architectural and historic interest [Ref Pews Benches & Chairs 2011]

### 3.1.2 Historic Restoration

“..ancient benches are nearly always a patchwork of historic restoration and nineteenth-century effort to follow original construction” [Ref Pews Benches & Chairs 2011 pg 112] It is rare to have a completely pewed out nave with substantial percentage of seating still intact after over 500 years. “One of the only two sets of medieval pews in England to have been tree-ring dated which are recorded in the Vernacular Architecture Group database of dated buildings to have been constructed of trees felled between 1409 and 1441.” [Ref Pews Benches & Chairs 2011 pg 74] “To understand the chronology will require significantly more pews from across the country, in churches both urban and rural, to be scientifically dated. Dating will also help to test the suggestions made here concerning the reasons for the spread of fixed seats, but the indirect and fragmentary nature of the written sources means that there will always be a significant degree of uncertainty” [Ref Pews

## Benches &amp; Chairs 201 pg 83]

The general repair [[Ref Pews Benches & Chairs 2011 p 98] is a key sign that bench ends are early is the presence of major repairs since it is unlikely that Oak renewed in the mid-to-late 19th century would require such treatment so soon after manufacturer. However repairs were often carried out with great skill in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a coat or two of copal varnish make it difficult to detect the repairs. [Ref Pews Benches & Chairs 2011 p 99]. One must look for differences in grain and colour, accuracy of finish for 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration, and possible drill holes for any 19<sup>th</sup> century candles. The flooring will deteriorate first and is likely to have been replaced as is the case in St Michaels Cropthorne [See Primary Sources 3.2]

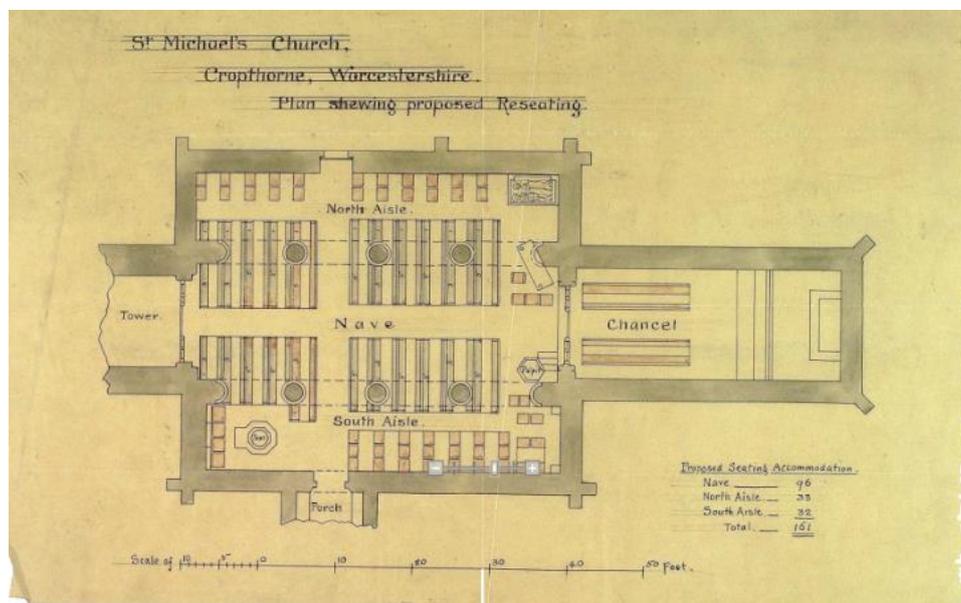
The components of early pews are sculpture ornament and skilled Joinery. Pews are made up of different components such as bench ends, seats, seat backs and fronts, capping rails, beaded moulding. Tracery of late 15<sup>th</sup> century Gothic design are represented in the form of tracery heads. Late 15<sup>th</sup> century included trefoil leaves. 3 lobed leaves. “as well as geometric or tracery designs, were used before and after the Reformation, though their style may sometimes suggest an earlier or a later date” [Ref Pews Benches & Chairs 2011 p76]

### 3.2 Primary Sources/Historical Photographs St Michaels Church Crothorne with Analysis

Worcestershire Archive Records were examined in the time frame allowed for this assessment. Box 850 BA 9085/5 and Box 728 BA 3008 contents were examined for any reference to the pews in St Michaels Church.

Reference Box 728 BA 3008

- Two ground plans dating from 1892 by Jethro Cossins were found that are the same as those on the Lambeth Palace Church Plans records dated 1896. Drawing no 2675 dated 1892 shows original seat layout as does 1896 Lambeth Palace Church Plans ICBS09938 CROPTHORNE, St. Michael. [See Section 2.4 Church Plans] There is a second plan of proposals dated 1892 drawing no 2676 that is identical to proposed reseating CBS09938a CROPTHORNE, St. Michael 1896. This proposed reseating appears to not correspond to the current pew layout. [See Section 2.4 Church Plans]



Proposed Reseating CROPTHORNE, St. Michael 1896. by Jethro Cossins.

Image Courtesy Lambeth Palace Church Plans ICBS09938a CROPTHORNE, St. Michael

- Documents dating from 1893 25/05/1893 and 03/06/1893 Faculty for 'Alterations And Restoration Crothorne Church' discuss the proposals for restoration of the Nave Aisles, Porch and Tower: to reroof the Nave, Aisles and Porch, repair the walls thereof and of the tower and provide new stonework where necessary – to block up the doorway in the fourth wall of the tower – \*to remove the whole of the pews and seats together with the font reading desk and pulpit – take up the floors – remove the soil underneath to a depth of about nine inches, cover the whole area of the church with concrete and lay down a new floor with wood blocks under the seats, the grave stones now forming part of the floor being re-laid in as nearly as possible their original positions – to place chairs in the North and South aisles in lieu of the old pews proposed to be removed therefrom and to repair, rearrange and re-fix the other pews and seats – provide a new Reading Desk, Lectern, Faldstool, Pulpit and Choir

Stalls – to place the Font in a more suitable position – erect the Organ in the North Aisle near the Chancel – remove the Monument to members of the family of Dineley now at the East End of the North aisle of the Nave to the West End of the said Aisle – to place the ancient Cross, proposed to be removed from the external wall of the Chancel at the West end of the South Aisle – to place between the piers of the Tower Arch an open screen of oak – provide a new heating apparatus – and to excavate the ground round the church for the purpose of drainage and to lower several gravestones (WAAS: Crothorne BA 3008: 03- 06- 1893)

\* **Note:** the proposal for removal of the ‘whole of the pews’ is problematic as from RDAs observations it does not appear that they were dismantled and reassembled. It is certain that the box pews were removed. As for ‘taking up of floors’ our observations conclude that the pew platforms do not appear to have been dismantled in the south west end corner or elsewhere in the nave and probably remain on earth. The proposal to cover the ‘whole area of the church with concrete’ was probably not undertaken. A section of deal floorboards from the platforms would need to be lifted to see what is beneath. The only pew removal we can find via our research was the two pews in the north west end in the nave in 1931 to accommodate the organ in the west end wall. [WRO BA 9085/3 [iv]] This was not the proposed position in 1893 ‘to the North Aisle near the Chancel’. The same can be said for ‘removal of the Monument to the Dinley Family in the East End of the West End’. Today it is still in its original position. Placing the c1850 font in a totally different position also did not take place, but it may have been moved backwards towards the Vestry screen. {RDA 2019}



Evidence of earth floor beneath pew kerb in the north aisle west end corner where floor abutting has no fitted carpet

**Reference Box 850 BA 9085/5** its contents were examined for any reference to the pews in St Michaels Church.

- 1931 papers relating to moving the organ [Note: bought in 1919 from St Andrews Church Pershore was originally in the Chancel Arch [Ref A history of St Michaels & Village Crothorne Author Anon] This involved removing two pews from the west end [BA 9085/3(iv)]
- 1954-1956 Correspondence with Richard & Starling Ltd Architects about death watch beetle infestation to the floorboards under the pews “ Floors- Death watch beetles are attacking the oak marginal kerbs surrounding the wooden floors. At several points the insects have emerged through the floorboards which consist of oak, elm and softwoods. This is very obvious at the West end of the Nave and suggests that the sub-floor timbers are being attacked. Some of the boards appear to be resting on the soil but modern, suspended construction has been used where the floors have been restored” “ Furniture- A pew at the East end of the North aisle has been attacked by Death Watch Beetle. Other pews show signs of damage by Common Furniture beetle.” [BA 9085/5 (viii)]
- 1956 Correspondence instructing spraying of timbers. Opening up of the flooring in the nave and treating the timbers below. .” [BA 9085/5 (viii)]
- 1967 Peter Falconer & Partners Architects Report on interior includes mentioning The Nave “ The main aisle floor is of very old stone and is rather uneven. The pews stand on timber flooring which is a combination of elm boards and more recent deal. These floors appear sound but there were signs of timber beetle attack.....” [BA 9085/5 (vii)]

### **Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service Photographic Archive Microfiche Crothorne Parish**

Microfiche records and local reference from WAAS were checked by RDA and the following interiors are of interest. No Photographs were found of the West End South Aisle pews

- Photo 1 c1894 Before repairs to chancel Crothorne A Victorian Walkabout WAAS 442-449,
- Photo 2 c1896-1905 after repairs to Chancel. New Pulpit WAAS 442-449,
- Photo 3 1899 photo archive 6734
- Photo 4 1900 oak collection box on a cylindrical column photo archive 4529
- Photo 5 1910 photo archive 45601
- Photo 6 1920 Tower & W End Nave photo archive 11352
- Photo 7 1940 Postcard Photo Archive 561128
- Photo 8 1956 Interior Photo Archive Pulpit removed 11743



**Photo 1** c1894 Before repairs to chancel 'Crothorne A Victorian Walkabout' WAAS 442-449. **Note** the stone flagstone floor, Pulpit by the Dineley tomb, box pews in the chancel



**Photo 2** c1896-1905 after repairs to Chancel. **Note** Original pulpit removed, New Pulpit on the right of Chancel Arch. WAAS 442-449



**Photo 3** 1899 photo archive Microfiche 6734. **Note** Doors on the front benches; bench ends without tracery presumed deteriorated and lack of some timber gothic buttresses on bench ends

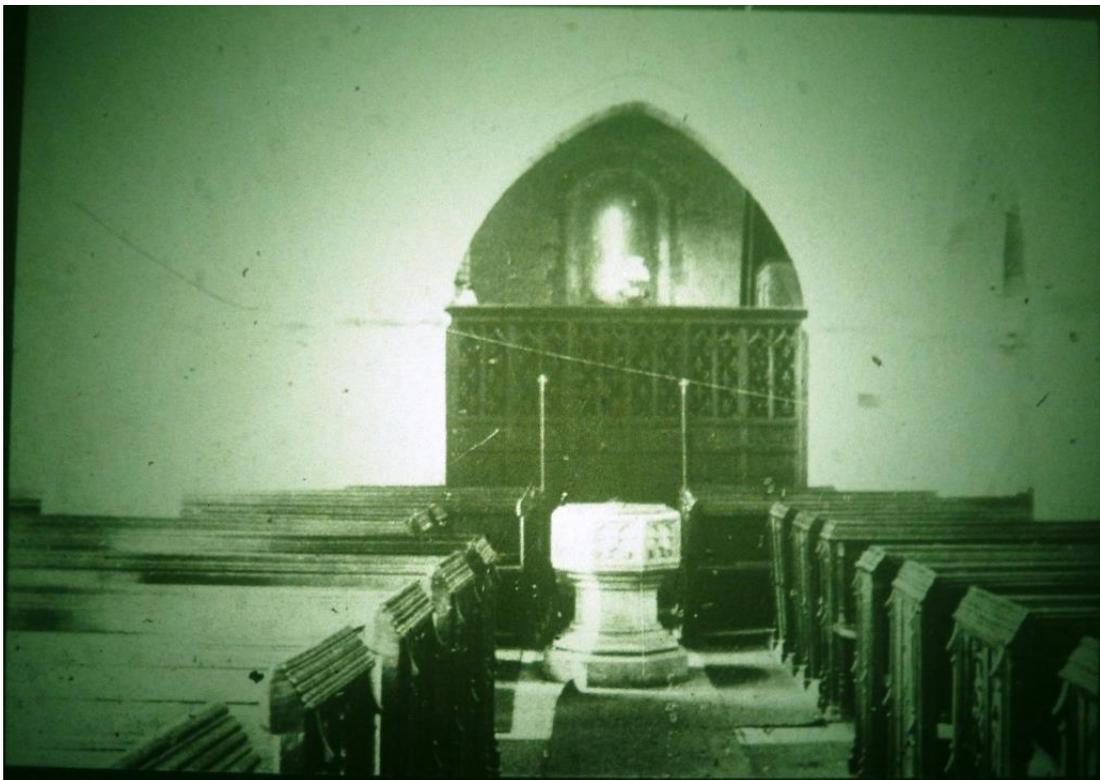


**Note** the deterioration of the bench end next to the cylindrical collection box. Dividing moulding lost and gothic buttress in poor state. **Note** also the brick flooring to South Aisle and stone floor in the mid aisle. This is the only photograph found that shows the decay of the pews at this time in 1900. Further restoration having been carried out after this date.

**Photo 4** 1900 oak collection box on a cylindrical column photo archive 4529



**Photo 5** 1910 photo archive 45601 Note all pews seen seem to have timber buttresses and in good repair



**Photo 6** 1920/1930s tower & w end nave photo archive 11352 Note Pews seem in good condition



**Photo 7** 1940 Postcard Photo Archive 561128. C1850 Font looking towards chancel



**Photo 8** 1956 Interior photo archive 11743

### 3.3 Secondary Sources St Michaels Church Crophorne with Analysis

A desk and web based assessment was carried out by RDA using books, and appropriate websites for references to St Michaels Church Crophorne. The church has its own printed guidebook that was also consulted.

#### Noake's Guide to Worcestershire 1868

*John Noake was one of the prolific writers on Worcestershire of the Nineteenth Century, working with the County's archives, newspapers and church papers. In this Guide, Noake gives a few paragraphs to each town and village.*

His entry for Crophorne :- “Charlton and Netherton were both hamlets in Crophorne until 1864, when Netherton was added to Elmley Castle by order in Council. Charlton is distinguished as the ancient residence of the once famous Worcestershire family of Dingley, or Dineley, who were originally from Lancashire, and whose monuments in Crophorne church—at least that of Francis Dineley—speaks of their having been nobly descended, but not more noble than the splendid array of offspring from the said Francis. There they are—nineteen children, rank and file, portrayed around his gorgeous tomb, but which some Malthusian old bachelor of a churchwarden has indignantly hid behind a pew. The male line of the Dineleys terminated with Sir Edward, whose daughter Eleanor married Edward Goodere, of Burghope, afterwards knighted, who died in 1739.”

#### Ferry, Emma Medievalism, Modernity and Memory Crophorne Church 1892-1910

*The author is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Art and Design at Nottingham Trent University. Her research focuses upon nineteenth century design, particularly interiors and dress. She has published several articles and book chapters on the women artists, designers, and writers who contributed to Macmillan's 'Art at Home Series' (1876–83)*

#### Extract from Interiors Volume 7 Issue 1 2016

“Concerns about the condition of Crophorne church were first raised in 1863 when the Reverend Robert Sanders, then Vicar of St. Michael’s, wrote to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners begging “most respectfully to call their immediate attention to the dilapidated, or more properly, dangerous state of the Chancel of Crophorne Church” (ECE/7/1/30030: 17-12-1863). The Commissioners informed the worried incumbent that they were no longer liable for repairs having transferred responsibility for the upkeep of the chancel to Francis Holland in 1861. Squire Holland, however, did nothing to remedy matters for almost thirty years until the arrival of a new vicar, the Reverend H. W. Wilkinson in 1892 (Crockford’s 1893: 1438). In September 1892, Mr. Wilkinson consulted Jethro Cossins, an architect who practiced in Birmingham “on the subject of repairing his church” (SPAB: 22-09-1892). Cossins, who had previously been employed by Wilkinson for the restoration of his former parish Church of All Saints at Burton Dassett in Warwickshire (1888-89), was also a member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and his previously unpublished letters to Thackeray Turner (1853-1937), then Secretary of the SPAB, indicate his concerns about the planned restoration of St. Michael’s; they describe the appalling condition of the church and refer to the requirements of his client. Cossins wrote: “I am sorry to have written to such a length but my anxiety to do the best for an interesting old chancel will I hope be enough excuse”. Besides the Vicar’s intentions to re-roof the nave, remove the clerestory, rebuild the porch; and, reposition a tomb, Cossins’ main concern was the north-east wall of the chancel, which bowed outwards “to a great extent” (SPAB: 22-09-1892). A report published the Berrow’s Journal described the sorry state of the church” [Ferry, E

2016]

At a Vestry Meeting held in May 1893 where the Vicar and his Churchwardens examined plans, specifications and estimates “for the proposed new heating apparatus”, it was decided that a faculty for the work should be obtained from the Diocese (WAAS: Cropthorne BA 3008: 25-05-1893). The planned refurbishment described in the Petition submitted to the Bishop of Worcester in June 1893 was ambitious and outlined the extensive works to be carried out in the “restoration of the Nave Aisles, Porch and Tower”: to reroof the Nave, Aisles and Porch, repair the walls thereof and of the tower and provide new stonework where necessary – to block up the doorway in the fourth wall of the tower – \*to remove the whole of the pews and seats together with the font reading desk and pulpit – take up the floors – remove the soil underneath to a depth of about nine inches, cover the whole area of the church with concrete and lay down a new floor with wood blocks under the seats, the grave stones now forming part of the floor being re-laid in as nearly as possible their original positions – to place chairs in the North and South aisles in lieu of the old pews proposed to be removed therefrom and to repair, rearrange and re-fix the other pews and seats – provide a new Reading Desk, Lectern, Faldstool, Pulpit and Choir Stalls – to place the Font in a more suitable position – erect the Organ in the North Aisle near the Chancel – remove the Monument to members of the family of Dineley now at the East End of the North aisle of the Nave to the West End of the said Aisle – to place the ancient Cross, proposed to be removed from the external wall of the Chancel at the West end of the South Aisle – to place between the piers of the Tower Arch an open screen of oak – provide a new heating apparatus – and to excavate the ground round the church for the purpose of drainage and to lower several gravestones (WAAS: Cropthorne BA 3008: 03- 06-1893) [Ferry , E 2016]

**Note** \*See Primary sources **Section 3.2** on RDAs observations on these proposals.

“The faculty for the proposed restoration was granted in July 1893 (WAAS: Cropthorne BA 3008: 03-06-1893) [See Primary sources Section 3.2] and the building works \* were undertaken by Alfred Groves & Son of Milton-under-Wychwood in Oxfordshire: affirm of building contractors who to this day are ‘committed to the use of traditional skills and construction methods (Groves 2012). The Norman tower and the exterior of the north aisle were “thoroughly repaired” (Berrow’s July 30, 1910: 2) while work began on rebuilding the chancel: these were the parts of the building in most need of attention.” [Ferry , E 2016]

**Note** \*It is important to note that not all works proposed were necessarily carried out {RDA 2019}

**Brooks, Alan and Nikolaus Pevsner. Buildings of England: Worcestershire, 2007.**

*Pevsner Architectural Guides Founding Editor Sir Nicholas Pevsner revision of the original guide to Worcestershire published in 1968*

When referring to the internal features at Cropthorne St Michaels the Pevsner Guide pg 248 states:

The Font “ Perp- style, c1850, wall painting discovered above the N arcade in 1911” ....“ Cross-Head the best Anglo-Saxon piece in the county. Large of oolite , the arms doubled cusped or lobed.” “C13 pillar piscina” “Stalls by Cossins with carvings by Louise and Minnie Holland added 1910”

“ Monuments- in the N aisle an early 14<sup>th</sup> century tomb recess with flattened ogee arch ball flower moulding and carved heads. Beneath it the slightly coped coffin-shaped slab of a priest with incised

cross, it's stem flanked by a hand raised in blessing and a chalice perhaps circa 1200"... "Francis Dingley 1624 and his wife Elizabeth. Two painted recumbent effigies, he in armour, 19 children kneeling small against the high tomb chest; three who died in infancy are poignantly shown in their cradles".. "Edward Dingley 1646 and his wife Joyce, perhaps also by Baldwin, but much more accomplishe. Standing monument with kneeling husband and wife facing each other across a prayer desk."..... "Seven children again kneeling small against the tomb chest, though the boy who died young is here raised on a pedestal"

When referring to the pews the Pevsner guide states on pg 248:-

"The pews with traceried bench ends are partly 15<sup>th</sup> century, much renewed"\*

**Note** \*From RDAs assessment [see Section 3.2 and 3.4] we would question the statement above that the pews are much renewed here. Instead the pews have been able to be kept in an almost original plan form and fabric due to skilled and considerate maintenance and conservation {RDA 2019}

**Bridges, Tim. Churches of Worcestershire, 2005.**

*Tim Bridges lectures widely on church architecture and history has published books on the churches of Worcestershire and the Black Country. He also serves on the Worcestershire & Dudley Historic Churches Trust, and the Worcester and Birmingham Diocesan Advisory Committees and, since March 2010, also works as Church Buildings Support Officer in Hereford Diocese.*

With Reference to Tim Bridges Churches of Worcestershire, Chapter 2 'Church Decorations Fittings and Setting' pg 13

" there are relatively few survivals of medieval church fittings and furnishings in Worcestershire, to understand them it is perhaps best to explore a typical interior examining features as they would have been in their medieval context"..... "the entrance doorway to the nave may contain a medieval door which might be cross patterned as at Upton Snodsbury or mediaeval ironwork work as a Astley. Sometimes there is evidence of greater securities than just the lock, with mortices for huge wooden bolts as at Shelsey Walsh...." "the font was usually in the nave at the west end of the church where many still are today" ..... "many naves are now filled with pews though these did not arrive until the later Middle Ages. Early congregations stood or made use of stone seats around the edge of the nave, none of which has survived in Worcestershire. The earliest pews in the county are of 15<sup>th</sup> century, ranging from plain benches at Warndon to seats with panelled ends and tracery at Crothorne or the Littletons. There is 16<sup>th</sup> century linenfold panelling at Strensham" ...."Few medieval pulpits survive in and around Worcestershire" pg 13

With Reference to Tim Bridges Churches of Worcestershire Crothorne Pg 73

"The interior contains many interesting fittings. In the chancel there are medieval image brackets, an aumbrey and a 13<sup>th</sup> century piscina. A further piscina denotes the site of a chantry in the south aisle. The benches have many fine panelled ends with tracery of about 1500 and there are traces of figures in a mediaeval wall painting on the north wall of the nave. The font dates from about 1850"

### Other Secondary Sources researched

Other Secondary sources were found on the Victoria County History website [See 2.3] and Worcester and Dudley Historic Churches website has a brief description, Bibliography and photographs including showing the solid stone floors.

<https://www.worcesteranddudleyhistoricchurches.org.uk/index.php?page=crothorne>

### Worcester And Dudley Historic Churches website

Photographs January 2019 showing the floor before the fitted carpets with the old stone flagstone abutting the pew platforms



Photo Courtesy **Worcester And Dudley Historic Churches website**



Photo Courtesy **Worcester And Dudley Historic Churches website**

**Other Archives not accessed or in scope of this assessment**

Jethro Cossins 1882-90 MS notes and Church drawings Birmingham Archives

Cathedral and Church Building Library Westminster London

C of E Record Centre & Lambeth palace Library London

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings London

### 3.4 Photographs & On Site Analysis

#### 3.4.1 Summary

An onsite survey inspection/photographs/assessment of the fabric of the pews in the west end south aisle corner was carried out by RDA as was the brief and a visit was made to a comparison site at St Nicholas Middle Littleton. As the author Tim Bridges states St Nicholas Church and St Michaels Church are the only two churches in Worcestershire to have naves of 15<sup>th</sup> century pews with tracery, and the only two out of four to have early pews in the nave.

#### 3.4.2 General Interior Photographs St Michaels Church Crothorne



Interior photo of the nave and pews looking towards the tombs of the Dineley Family



Interior photo of the nave and pews west end corner looking towards organ in north aisle

### 3.4.3 Assessment of the Pews West End Corner

The west end south aisle comprises of a block of five benches. The first two sets from the front measure approximately (10ft10 inches) in length, including the front panel, number one is interrupted by a stone arcade pillar. The back three rows being (12ft 6in) in length, number five being interrupted by a stone arcade pillar. The heights of the pews capped with moulded capping rails from the platform are approximately 35 inches with bench ends of tracery heads approximately 21 inches in width. The front panel to the benches is made up of 6 panels of pairs arcaded desk front with detailed traceried heads 21 inches, bench ends. **[Photo A]** On the reverse of the front tracery, panels are grooved into stiles and are set at 16 inches apart for support. All other bench panels are grooved into styles set at 35 inches apart. There has been no disturbance to the seat plans, they appear to be the the original 15<sup>th</sup> century plan, even if the floor has been renewed underneath or re-laid beside in the aisles.

Over the centuries there have been minor and conservation repairs such as the three middle seats have been widened by timber sections added to the front of the seats to increase the seating depth. **[Photo B]** Timber gothic buttresses on the traceried panels have been renewed throughout the area and throughout the pews in the church. [Possibly in 1893-4.] **[Photo C]** All of the platform kerbs are original 15<sup>th</sup> century, they are 5 inches high and 4 inches wide, with stepped mouldings **[Photo D & E]**. In this west end south aisle corner section, all floor boards are 19<sup>th</sup> century /early 20<sup>th</sup> century replacement timber of deal board, of 4 ½ inches width, documentary evidence survives stating the floor had been attacked by death watch beetle in the 1950s to which these may date. (There are a couple of older wider boards that survive in the west end north aisle and the rest of the nave pew flooring has a mix of narrow and wide floor planks.) All of the capping rails are original 15<sup>th</sup> century with worn mouldings and some deflection in the timber that indicates authentication. All rails are pegged. **[Photo F]**

Two of the tracery panelled heads have undergone restoration to a high standard in the 19<sup>th</sup> century probably with the conservation that went on in 1894, mid aisle by the vestry screen. **[Photo G]** All of the remaining tracery heads are all original 15th century in this west end block with fleurettes and foliage in spandrels although necessary patch repair has been carried out to some inner convex mouldings **[Photo H]** and central mouldings. The benching seat backs are smooth and the panel joints are almost invisible **[Photo I]**, (the bench against west wall has visible gap in boards, the reverse hidden so unable to verify **[Photo J]**) Regarding the whole block it is a sign that they are the original seat backs in that the panels are tongue and grooved and the reverse is designed to give the appearance of a lapped construction, this sophisticated illusion was created by providing a chamfer for the panels as they entered the groove and providing the segmental beading at this point which is allowed to die away when above the base of the panel which is typical of the 15<sup>th</sup> century construction **[Photo K]**. [Ref Pews Benches & Chairs 2011p.125] The seats are in their original positions and were originally unsupported and tenoned into the inside the bench ends. They now have some interspersed, possibly 17<sup>th</sup> century brackets, for seat support. Inner face of mullions have convex chamfered mouldings The hymn book shelving is in the original mortice cut and in its original height and position. The fourth shelf near the font appears to have a 19<sup>th</sup> century s repair. **[Photo L]**



**A** The front panel to the benches is made up of 6 panels of pairs arched desk front with detailed tracery heads



**B** Three middle seats that have been widened by timber sections added to the front of the seats



**C** Timber gothic buttresses on the tracery panels have been renewed



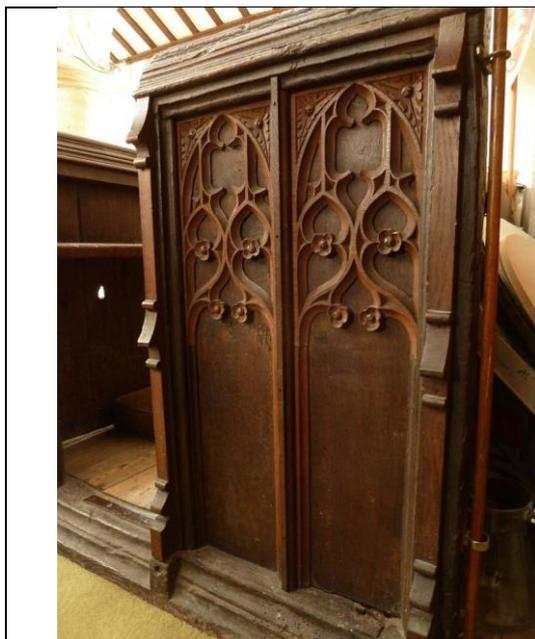
**D** Platform kerbs are original 15<sup>th</sup> century



**E** Platform kerbs are original 15<sup>th</sup> century



**F** All of the capping rails are original 15<sup>th</sup> century with worn mouldings



**G** Two of the tracery panelled heads have undergone restoration.



**H** Necessary patch repair inner convex mouldings and central mouldings.



**I** Seat backs are smooth and the panel joints are almost invisible



**J** Bench against west wall has visible gap in boards, the reverse hidden

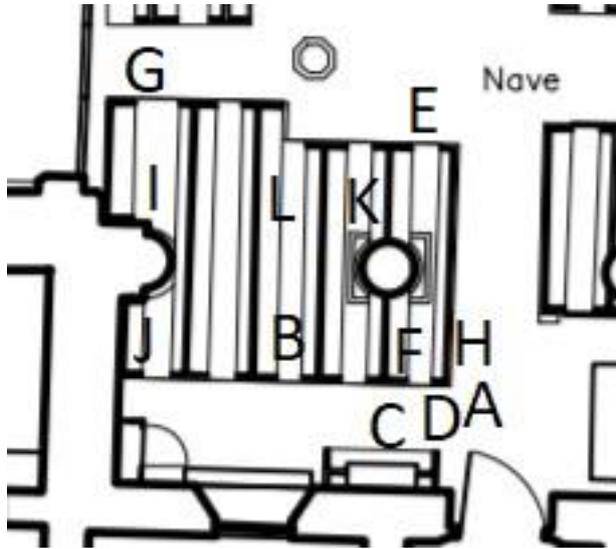


**K** Panels are tongue and grooved



**L** Fourth shelf near the font has 19<sup>th</sup> century repair

### Key Plan to Photos West End Block of Pews



#### West End Block of Pews

Key Plan enlarged and annotated by RDA.  
Approximate locations/direction of photos.  
Original plan Courtesy Caroe & Partners

### 3.4.4 Comparison site St Nicholas Middle Littleton



Location: North and Middle Littleton, Wychavon, Worcestershire, WR11 Tithe Barn next door owned by National Trust

**Entry Name:** Church of St Nicholas

**Listing Date:** 30 July 1959

**Grade:** II\*

**Source:** Historic England

**Source ID:** 1303224

**English Heritage Legacy ID:** 147613

Listing text for Interior "Norman round font, pulpit of C15 to C16 wooden panels, C16 bench ends. Gothic reredos with 3 panels painted on metal, 1876. Some medieval floor tiles in North transept and chancel wall niche. <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101303224-church-of-st-nicholas-north-and-middle-littleton#.XankDehKjDc>

**Brooks, Alan and Nikolaus Pevsner. Buildings of England: Worcestershire, 2007.p494**

Entry for Middle Littleton St Nicholas

“Severely restored by Preedy 1871 -5 rebuilt the nave N wall most of the Chancel”

Internal -“19<sup>th</sup> century encaustic floor tiling and heavy archbraced roofs” ... “Font- Norman round tapering bowl with one band of thin decorated lozenges. Pulpit hexagonal perp panels- PEWS- a complete 15 - 16<sup>th</sup> century set, much renewed\*, moulded straight tops traceried bench ends” ... 14<sup>th</sup> century 15<sup>th</sup> century tiles on the N transept floor and beneath the chancel NE lancet” [Brooks Pevsner 2007 pg 494]

**Note** \* Again here the Pevsner guide describes the pews like at St Michaels as ‘much renewed’. Our observations were that they have undergone many more changes than at St Michaels with many more patch repairs. The middle section by the entrance door has pews of different design to the bench ends and here some linenfold designs that would indicate here they are 16<sup>th</sup> century. The earlier 15<sup>th</sup> century tracery bench ends and capping rails are very similar to those in St Michaels but without the decorative fleurettes and gothic timber buttresses. The benches are shorter. The kerbs are plainer than St Michaels and the floorboards are of an earlier date.



The pewed out nave St Nicholas Middle Littleton



Traceried Bench End St Nicholas

**Bridges, Tim. Churches of Worcestershire, 2005. P156**

Middle Littleton -“There is a round Norman font, with a line of carved lozenges on sloping sides similar to the font in Suckley church and Decorated piscinae surviving in the chancel and transept. The nave has a set of benches with Perpendicular traceried ends, and similar panels have been incorporated into the pulpit.”

#### 4. Assessment of Significance

**Significance: The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.**

*In order to identify the significance of a place, it is necessary first to understand its fabric, and how and why it has changed over time; and then to consider: who values the place, and why they do so; how those values relate to its fabric; their relative importance; whether associated objects contribute to them; the contribution made by the setting and context of the place; how the place compares with others sharing similar values. [Ref Conservation Principles English Heritage/Historic England p21]*

The English Heritage [now Historic England] Guidance Conservation Principles 2008 on assessing significance sets out the following four areas for consideration:

- **Evidential value:** *the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity. Evidential value derives from the physical remains or genetic lines that have been inherited from the past. The ability to understand and interpret the evidence tends to be diminished in proportion to the extent of its removal or replacement.*
- **Historical value:** *the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative*
- **Aesthetic value:** *the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place*
- **Communal value:** *the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory ....Communal values are closely bound up with historical (particularly associative) and aesthetic values, but tend to have additional and specific aspects.*

*[Conservation Principles English Heritage 2008]*

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/>

#### Historic England Places of Worship Advice on Significance

Understanding fabric and development

A good understanding of the building's fabric and its development over time will help you to plan appropriate changes to the interior and the historic fabric. Particularly in relation to old buildings that may have developed over centuries. Past changes to places of worship and their furnishings may be of historic interest because they illustrate changing styles of worship and architectural design. There may also be an association with an important historical figure or event. Newer places of worship are more likely to have been built in only one or two phases and may be the work of a single architect.

However old your building is, it will help to assess the following:

- The architectural and historic interest of the building
- The aesthetic qualities and interest of its design and character
- Its archaeological interest
- The fabric - in other words, the materials used to build it
- The furnishings - identifying the age, rarity and quality of the internal furnishings and fittings
- The building's footprint, including its external composition and internal plan form
- Its spatial qualities and decorative schemes

Where the building is by a well-known architect, you may find it useful to compare it with other examples of their work. This may show whether your building is typical of their work or has unusual features. It's also often helpful to set the building in a regional and/or national context (for example if it's an unusual building or one of a series of buildings with similar qualities).

Historic England advises on Interiors of Places of Worship on Furnishings and features

“Generally, the rarer or more complete an historic interior, the stronger the case for its retention. There will be cases where the nature or quality of the interior means that there is little scope for internal adaptation”

“If your place of worship has high quality furnishings such as altars, pulpits, choir stalls or reading desks, these are likely to make a significant contribution to the special interest of the building”

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/places-of-worship/>

## 4.1 Summary of Significance of the Pews in St Michaels Church gained from this Report

The four principle Significance Values the Pews in St Michaels Church have only been based on the scope and limitations of this report and further evidential and historical evidence of value may yet to be found.

### 4.1.1 Evidential Value/Architectural Value

#### SIGNIFICANCE VALUE-HIGH

- The Church of St Michael has a GD I listing designation
- “ Ancient benches are nearly always a patchwork of historic restoration and nineteenth-century effort to follow original construction” [Ref Pews Benches & Chairs 2011 pg 112]It is rare to have a completely pewed out nave with substantial percentage of seating still intact after over 500 years” therefore the ones in St Michaels Crothorne are highly significant.
- There are relatively few survivals of medieval church fittings and furnishings in Worcestershire, making the pews in St Michaels Crothorne highly significant for the County.
- The earliest pews in Worcestershire are of 15<sup>th</sup> century, ranging from plain benches at Warndon to seats with panelled ends and tracery at Crothorne or the Littletons
- Alterations and measures were taken to preserve the medieval benches in 1893 by Jethro Cossins and SPAB

### 4.1.2 Historical Value-

#### SIGNIFICANCE VALUE-HIGH

- Illustrative Value and interest because the pews illustrate changing style of worship in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and architectural design
- Associative value with Dineley Family who held the manor of Charlton from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century. There are two memorial tombs in St Michaels. The surviving 15<sup>th</sup> century benches in the Nave and the later 18<sup>th</sup> box pews that were removed in 1894 may well have been commissioned by this family
- Associative value with the Holland Family of Crothorne Court in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries who contributed to the rebuilding of the Chancel and alterations and additions.
- Associative value with Jethro Cossins Architect employed to undertake restoration work and the SPAB and its influence upon preserving the building and interior
- Associative value with Alfred Groves and Sons who for over 350 years have specialised in the maintenance, restoration and refurbishment of period, Grade I and Grade II listed properties and who carried out the conservation work in 1890s/ early C20th century
- Associative value with all the parishioners and vicar particularly responsible for the refurbishment by fund raising between 1892-1910 The restoration fund did not raise the whole amount required for the works so the work was done piece meal “ The ancient oak benches carefully repaired and an efficient heating apparatus put in” [Ferry, E 2016, p47]

#### 4.1.3 Aesthetic /Setting/Group Value

##### SIGNIFICANCE VALUE-HIGH

- The interior setting of this church is of high value making this building a GDI listed building. All fittings are in good repair. The oak pews are highly crafted and aesthetically pleasing.

#### 4.1.4 Community Value

##### SIGNIFICANCE VALUE-HIGH

- This place of worship has served its parish for hundreds of years and has been well looked after. In 1910 the major restoration work to preserve this building was completed and the Bishop of the Diocese came to reopen the church. In 1910 over 18 years the community had spent two thousand pounds, much given by generous donors. To this day the community value this church and it is important focal point in the village of Crothorne

### 5. Statement of Significance

The furnishings in St Michaels Church including the well maintained oak medieval pews in the nave are rare and the quality of these internal fittings are exceptionally high. There are few surviving examples of 15<sup>th</sup> century pews in England and few in Worcestershire. The pews in St Michaels are only one of two tracery examples in Worcestershire, the other example being at the Church of St Nicholas, Middleton. Many other early pews in Worcestershire were swept away with restorations to parish churches in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Worcestershire is blessed with medieval examples of misericords but not so with early pewed out naves. The 15<sup>th</sup> century pews in St Michaels make a significant contribution to the special interest of this building.

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