



## About St Michael's

Although Domesday Book mentions a church at Cowthorpe, the present church was built between 1456 and 1458 by Sir Bryan Rouclyff, a lawyer and Baron of the Exchequer, who inherited the manor and living of Cowthorpe c. 1450.

The church was constructed in a simple Perpendicular style with chancel, nave and integral tower, using local sandstone. The nave seems to incorporate masonry which may have come from the older church. The inner door of the south porch, which was added in the 16th century, appears ancient, as does the priest's door in the chancel. The tower, which has a battlemented parapet, is built on two buttresses linked by an arch, a design more appropriate for a castle gatehouse. It contains three bells of which the largest, coeval with the building, has the inscription 'O thou blyssid Trinite, of Bryan Rodlyff haf pyte' – the earliest use of English on a bell in Yorkshire. The other two bells were both made in York, the treble in 1767 and the second in 1622. The present stone slate roofs and nave ceiling are from a Victorian restoration, during which the principal 15th-century roof members were retained.

Heraldic shields in the stained glass, on the font and the memorial brass represent the benefactors of the church and show connections between important families in the area. Further shields, now blank, are found on the Easter Sepulchre and on the main roof beams.

The church was placed in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust in 1977.

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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.

### Help us do more

To protect these churches, and others like them, we need your help. If you enjoy your visit please give generously or if you would like to become a CCT supporter and join in our exclusive 'behind-the-scenes' visits please go to our website.



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## Church of St Michael

Cowthorpe



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## The historic church of St Michael

### 10 things to see before you leave...

- 1 In the south wall is a **piscina**, a basin used for washing communion vessels, with a drain for the water. An **ambry** for storing the utensils for the Eucharist is in the wall to the left of the piscina.
- 2 **Stone slab** in memory of John Turner and his wife. She died in 1712 at the age of 33, leaving him with three sons and two daughters.
- 3 Unusually, the **font** is square in shape and shows the arms of Sir Bryan Rouclyff (three lions' heads), his wife Joan Hammerton (hammers), Margaret Plumpton (five diamonds) who married their son and de Ros of Ingmanthorpe (three water vessels).
- 4 The wooden **Easter Sepulchre and chest** is of the late 15th century. It was formerly placed to the north of the altar for the symbolic concealment of the body and blood of Christ during Holy Week. The badges of Rouclyff (chess rooks) and de Burgh (fleur-de-lis) are carved at the top.
- 5 Original **roof timbers with carved wooden shields** on which coats of arms would have been painted.
- 6 Remnants of a **brass memorial** mounted on a cedar board. A drawing of the memorial was published in 1864 before a tinker stole the brass. The surviving pieces were recovered in 1886. The brass was originally mounted on a slab of Purbeck marble. The inscription at the feet of the donors prays for God's mercy on Bryan Rouclyffe and Johan his wife and for forgiveness of their sins. Between Sir Bryan and his wife is depicted the tomb of John de Burgh, Sir Bryan's maternal uncle.
- 7 **Commandment boards** from around 1840 to the north and south of the altar.
- 8 The **altar rails** probably date from the first quarter of the 17th century.
- 9 In the 17th century, six heraldic shields were recorded in the **stained glass** of the east window. Only those for Ros (water vessels) and Rouclyff (red lions' heads) remain. Fragments of canopies in the east window and the south wall suggest that figures of saints and donors may originally have been represented.
- 10 **Shield** recording the marriage between Ellen, daughter of Sir Bryan and Joan, and John Ingleby, son of Thomas, Knight of the Shire of York and founder of Ripley Church. Ingleby was one of the founders of Mount Grace Priory.

