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Biography:

Emma Ferry is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Art and Design at Nottingham Trent University. Her research focuses upon 19th 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).

Title of Article:

Medievalism, Modernity and Memory: Cropthorne Church, 1892-1910

Abstract:

'An old church is so common and so familiar an object that we are often in danger of forgetting its value...'

George Gilbert Scott (1811-78)

Recorded in the Domesday Survey for Worcestershire (1086), the Church of St. Michael in Cropthorne, Worcestershire is an ancient building with a rich history. Drawing on surviving manuscript and visual sources, this article examines the repairs, restoration and refurbishments made to the interior of St. Michael's between 1890 and 1910. This was a period in which the ownership of the village shifted from the Anglican Church to private patronage and a time which witnessed many changes to the fabric of the building; notably the extensive refurbishments carried out to the chancel in 1894 by Francis Holland, the Lord of the Manor and the restoration of the rest of Cropthorne church which took more than eighteen years to complete. Highlighting the significance of the Church in rural areas as a place for personal and community memory, this article will consider how these changes to a sacred space used for communal worship were linked to the social changes experienced by the rural community that worshipped within it: moving beyond a purely architectural survey of the building, it will identify the agents of these changes; the processes involved in accomplishing them; and, responses to these alterations. Consequently, the alterations and additions to the interior of St. Michael's made at the instigation and expense both of the Holland Family of Cropthorne Court and the people of Cropthorne will be analyzed in the context of the changing religious, technological, social, economic and political conditions of the period, which include the effects of the Agricultural Depression and the devastating impact of war.

Key Words: Victorian church restoration; SPAB; rural idyll; heritage

Medievalism, Modernity and Memory: Cropthorne Church, 1892-1910

There are more Anglican churches in England than there are banks or petrol stations. Of the 16,300 churches, more than 12,000 are listed, with 4,200 classified at Grade I or A, representing 45% of all buildings listed at this grade (Cooper 2004: 16). A report titled *Places of Worship and the Tourism Destination Experience* (2006), commented upon the significance of these "spaces of faith" which make up England's largest estate of listed buildings:

> […] these sacred spaces are integral to the story of the places and communities within which they have evolved. They are signposts of our heritage, points where you can touch history, as well as places of visual and spiritual wonder (Bembridge 2006: 3).

A marker of history, an embodiment of social memory, and a place of religious worship, the rural English parish church can also be understood as "an unfolding serial event, a building as narrative" (Markus 1993: 5). Indeed, as architectural historian and theorist, Thomas A. Markus explains further, from its conception, "through its design, production, use, continuous reconstruction in response to changing use, until its final demolition, the building is a developing story, traces of which are always present" (Markus 1993: 5).

In the case of St. Michael's church in Cropthorne, Worcestershire, many traces of that story remain; functioning as a palimpsest, this church's ongoing narrative can, quite literally, be read from its walls. First recorded in the *Domesday Survey* (1086) the church at Cropthorne is an ancient building with a rich history that can be re-constructed from a range of surviving texts and images. This article, itself another text, adds to that narrative; highlighting eventful episodes in its developing story and demonstrating how far these physical changes reflect a more profound "social and cultural transformation" (Brooks 1995: 52). Here, more than gratuitous alliteration, the three themes of this

article, "medievalism", "modernity" and "memory", can be read as competing narratives, while the concerns surrounding ownership, responsibility and community that emerge suggest that this "building-as-text" is a multi-authored manuscript.

Drawing upon previously unpublished archival evidence, the first part of this article considers the wider contexts in which the church was restored before focusing upon the rebuilding of the chancel (1892-94). Examining the paternalistic role played by the local land-owner, it also considers the strategies through which space was appropriated within the chancel; turning the most sacred part of the Parish church into a chantry chapel. Here, also highlighting the role played by Jethro Anstice Cossins (1830-1917), the architect employed to undertake the restoration work, it consider his connections with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (f.1877) and the influence this had upon the building and its interior. Next, this article discusses the refurbishment of the rest of the church between 1892 and 1910, for which the parishioners were responsible. Here, focusing upon the fund-raising activities undertaken by this small village community and the central role played by its vicar, it considers the importance of what Chris Brooks has identified as "oligarchic funding" (Brooks 1995:60); a method of raising money that had a profound effect upon the interior decoration and furnishing of the church.

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Cropthorne 1860-1910

When considering the on-going changes that affect buildings, Markus has pointed out that "Transformations are partly governed by the nature of the building and those who occupy it, and partly by external events" (Markus 1993:6). The external events of the period 1860-1910 – the social, economic, political, religious and cultural changes which occurred at local, regional, national and international levels – had significant effects upon the restoration of the church at Cropthorne and its interior.

One of the earliest and most significant changes for Cropthorne church in this period relates to land-ownership. The Manor of Cropthorne was mentioned as a Royal Estate in a charter dated 814 (*Victoria County History* 1913: 324), while more than two hundred years later the *Domesday Survey* for Worcestershire (1086) recorded the presence of a priest holding half a hide at Cropthorne (*Domesday* 2003 [1086]: 480). The Benefice of Cropthorne is later mentioned in the *Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV* (1291) consisting of the church at Cropthorne, then valued at £7 6s 8d (Denton et al 2014). After the Reformation, the parish of Cropthorne was granted to the newly constituted Worcester Chapter Estates in 1542 and ownership remained with the Dean and Chapter until it was transferred to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1859. The Commissioners' Estate in the Parish of Cropthorne consisted of 931 acres of land (*Victoria County History* 1913: 322). This holding was surveyed by the Commissioners' Land Agents in 1861, who recommended that the Cropthorne Estate should be sold (ECE/6/1/129). Sales were gradually made but the majority of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners' land in Cropthorne was sold to Francis Dermot Holland (1828-1907), who purchased 636 acres on 31st July 1861. Significantly, with this sale came the transfer of responsibility for the repair of the chancel of St. Michael's church; the most sacred space within the building (ECE/7/1/22138).

Holland owned over 40% of the land in Cropthorne and was the single largest landowner in the Parish. Moreover, as a Justice of the Peace, Poor Law Guardian and Lay Rector, he exerted considerable local power that was not challenged until the franchise was extended and local government reforms were introduced at the end of the century. The political changes enacted in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, notably the enfranchisement of the agricultural laborer in 1884, had far-reaching effects; but it was the introduction of the Local Government Act (1894) that established a system of elected Parish and District Councils, which undermined the paternalistic alliance of "squire and parson with, as its twin centres, the big house and the church" (Brooks 1995: 55). Before 1894, the Vestry, the administrative committee for a parish, "remained part of

civil, as well as the ecclesiastical, administrations of the village" (Chadwick 1972: 193). However, the Local Government Act (1894) altered the power structures within the village; the Vestry was replaced with an elected rural parish council and local administration transferred from the gentry to the village craftsmen and farmers (or in the case of Cropthorne, market gardeners). This shift is demonstrated clearly at Cropthorne, where a surviving "Notice of Poll" for elections of Parish and Rural District Councilors for Cropthorne in 1894, listed the candidates and their proposers (WAAS**:** 497.25 (ii) BA 9715/8). Inevitably Francis Dermot Holland "Gentleman", stood for election, but so too did five market gardeners, the blacksmith, the carpenter, a farmer and a laborer. Although Holland, still a major land-owner and employer within Cropthorne, was successful in the first election under the new Act, this political change meant that by the end of the century the only power remaining in the hands of the Vestry was "that of looking after the parish church, and that had become a voluntary undertaking" (Brooks 1995: 51).

The up-keep of the church became voluntary following the Compulsory Church Rate Abolition Act (1868). The Church Rate had been a contentious form of local taxation on all occupiers of property regardless of religious belief; its abolition meant "that for the first time in a millennium the established church was deprived of legally prescribed financial support from parishioners" (Ellens 2008: 263). The beliefs and patterns of worship of Cropthorne's parishioners were recorded by the Religious Census taken on 30th March 1851. It showed that of Cropthorne's total population of 336 souls, only 152 (45%) attended the morning service at St Michael's church (a figure that included Sunday Scholars) with 84 (25%) forming the afternoon congregation (Aitken 2000: 71). A group of Primitive Methodists also held meetings in Cropthorne; challenging the Anglican monopoly within the village: the Religious Census recorded that a group of 40, (equivalent to 11% of the village population), attended an "Old Conference Methodist" evening meeting at Patty's Farm, where Methodists met "for three generations and continued there until the 1920s" (Cox 1982: 4). However, it is also worth noting that

the census figures reveal that approximately 34% of the population of Cropthorne attended no religious services at all; as a contemporary clergyman remarked "Indifferentism, if not Infidelity, I fear is the prevailing characteristic of the day in most country parishes" (Horn 1987: 164).

To these changes should be added the economic and social consequences of the great Agricultural Depression, which began at the end of the 1870s. Interestingly, while many parts of the country suffered, Cropthorne in the Vale of Evesham, with its sheltered climate and suitable soil, actually gained labor; market gardening became the dominant form of land-use, growing specialist fruit and vegetable crops, which were sent to expanding urban markets via the railway network (Howkins 1991: 213; Robinson 1981). At the beginning of the 20th century, the land at Cropthorne was "nearly entirely occupied for market gardening" (*Kelly's* 1904: 68). It was a period of growth and prosperity for the village; though changes in its social make-up and the "flight from the land" (Armstrong 1981) are evident from Census Records for Cropthorne (WAAS: Census Returns 1841-1931). Figures examined for the period 1841-1931 show a number of fluctuations, although the small village is relatively stable; maintaining a population of between 300 to 400 inhabitants over this period. This was also a time in which rural England was "re-discovered" (Howkins 1987) and Cropthorne became part of the pastoral idyll represented for a new mass-audience. The village's pretty black-and-white cottages were described in publications such as Ditchfield's *The Cottages and the Village Life of Rural England* (1912) and painted by A. R. Quinton (1853-1934) for a series of picture-postcards that publicized Cropthorne as a desirable and unspoiled location for both new middle-class residents and tourists [figure 1]. Josephine Tozier's *Of English Inns: the Story of a Pilgrimage to Characteristic Spots of Rural England*, written for her American compatriots in 1904, described the village:

> Thatched cottages built of white clay and black oak beams; low stone walls topped by hedges; gabled porches; lattice windows open to sun and air, with stiff

> crimson geraniums in pots on the ledges; plumy elm-trees, and a glimpse down the street far over a woody country, - that is Cropthorne village (Tozier 1904: 99-100).

Cropthorne and its church had become part "of the central cultural and imaginative fantasies of the later nineteenth century" (Brooks 1995: 76); indeed Tozier's guidebook includes photographs of the village's main street and of the tombs inside the church [figure 2]. This myth of the countryside is now so deeply entrenched in our value system that it has grown beyond its "cultural and philosophical origins into the realms of popular and tangible expression in the actual landscapes and living spaces of modern society" (Bunce 1994: 2). It even pervades scholarly history. In his seminal study, *The Victorian Church* (1972), Owen Chadwick's chapter on "The Village Church" offers an idealized version of the rural church and its congregation:

> The squire was in his pew, his friend the parson in his stall, respectable farmers in pews, and on benches the labourers in smock frocks, delicately embroidered at front and back, their wives often in scarlet flannel shawls. […] In some country parishes this time-honoured structure continued to the end of the century and beyond (Chadwick 1972: 151)

The accuracy of this vision is arguable. However, it remains a view which reveals:

> a fundamental truth about the rural church – as an institution in which the social hierarchy is precisely reproduced in the layout of the church and in which patterns of social command and patronage are reinforced on weekly basis (Dentith 1998: 31).

And it is precisely this social hierarchy that is enacted in the rebuilding of the chancel of Cropthorne church; its interior space and decoration a physical reminder of the Squire's status and power

Commented [LW2]: A lot of emphasis put on ownership and background up until this point, but is it possible to draw a greater link to its relationship with the interior?

The chancel

Church building, repair and restoration were the essence of the revival of the Anglican Church in the nineteenth century; "an enterprise of heroic proportions undertaken in response to social and cultural changes on an unprecedented scale and of an unprecedented nature" (Brooks 1995: 1). Between 1840 and 1873, 7,144 churches were restored with the widespread ecclesiastical restoration movement affecting approximately half of England's medieval churches (Tschudi-Madsen 1976: 25). Many of these medieval churches, which had gradually been adapted for Protestant worship since the Reformation, were quite literally falling down and Cropthorne church was among them.

Concerns about the condition of Cropthorne 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 Cropthorne 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:

> with its unsightly, damaged and crumbling interior and its dirty, bulging and uneven plaster, and patchy ceilings within and the yellow ochre colouring over the handsome arches and pillars (*Berrow's* July 30, 1910: 2)

Having considered Cossins' letter and examined plans and photographs of the church [figure 3] the specific advice and general aims of the SPAB were explained in Turner's lengthy reply. He warned:

> […] opinions upon the question of beauty are constantly changing so that our views as to beauty are an unsafe guide. And again it is generally wisest to make no change unless quite certain it will be to an improvement (SPAB: 01-10-1892).

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While the clerestory was to remain untouched, the condition of the chancel meant that drastic change was necessary; despite Turner's advice that: "if it can be made safe [...] Don't rebuild" (SPAB: 14-10-1892), the chancel was eventually demolished "with the exception of some eight or nine feet" during the summer of 1893 (Barnard 1926-7: 69).

Fortunately, photographs of the chancel before its demolition have been reproduced in *The Cropthorne Camera of Minnie Holland 1892-1905* (Cornell et al 1985:85-89). Conforming to the guidance offered by the Reverend Geldart's "manual for directions" *The Art of Garnishing Churches at Christmas and other times* (1868), one photograph is titled "Interior of Church at Harvest Time" [figure 4] while another shows the chancel decorated for Christmas. Both provide evidence of the simplicity of this sacred space, and offer an interesting contrast with the more elaborate Medievalism of Cossins' restoration.

Several archaeological recoveries and discoveries were made during the restoration of the chancel. A pre-Reformation altar slab was also found under the flooring of the south aisle (Cole 1933: 69-73) and the cross-head, described as the "best piece of Anglo-Saxon art in the county" (Pevsner, 1968, 128-9), was removed from the external south wall of the chancel (WAAS: Cropthorne BA 3008: 03-06-1893); this can be clearly scene in a water-colour of the church, engraved and published in 1815 [figure 5]. Other more gruesomely fascinating remains were also discovered during the work. According to Dr. Treadway Nash (1724-1811), an antiquary and historian of Worcestershire, who described St. Michael's church in 1781: "under the communion table is a large vault for the Dineley family, in which, as it is very dry, the bodies do not putrefy, but wither and retain their original form" (Nash 1781: 273-4). An article published by Worcestershire's Archaeological Society in 1926, commented that "investigations made in 1893 verified both these statements, for the vault was entered and […], through glass panels let into the coffins, the faces of the corpses were seen still covered with parchment-coloured skin" (Barnard 1926-7: 69). Miss Louisa Holland of Cropthorne Court, one of the Squire's daughters, entered the vault and made the following notes:

> The stone work under the east window had a large crack in it and the paving above the vault and steps to the altar gave way, leaving the vault exposed, and the architect (Mr. Jethro Cossins) thought it better to see if it were dry and intact.

> It was only open for about an hour or less. I went in and made notes of what I could decipher on five of the seven lead coffins lying there (Barnard 1926-7: 69).

Cossins' involvement in the restoration suggests that Wilkinson was a forward-thinking parish priest: this is certainly an early example of the SPAB's involvement. It seems likely that they were to save St. Michael's church from the type of restoration that caused so much criticism from contemporary authorities, notably the local historian J. W. Willis Bund (1843-1928), who was also Vice-Lieutenant of the County of Worcester; editor of the *Victoria County History*; and, a Chairman of the County Council, who lived in the neighboring village of Fladbury (Carney 1986:80).

In 1908 Willis Bund published a paper titled "The Restored Churches of Worcestershire", which originally had been presented to the Worcestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society. This paper was later printed and distributed privately by Willis Bund who refused to "omit certain things" that had "provoked a storm". This was largely because his explicit intentions were to show "how much of interest in the County had perished from the restoring zeal of well-meaning enthusiasts" (Willis Bund 1908: Preface). The result is a damning critique of church restoration within Worcestershire:

> It remained for our own day and our own time, for the 19th century of which we were so proud, to destroy as much, if not more than the Reformer or Puritan had done of ancient churches and ancient church furniture. What makes it worse is the fact that the 19th century destruction was done under the name of "restoration". Bishops blessed it, societies like the Worcestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society spoke very favorably of it and urged on the work of destruction, or as they called it, "the good work", until it is difficult to find in the County an unrestored church or one that does not in some way or other bear the marks of the fangs of the restorer. (Willis Bund 1908: 5)

The alterations and additions carried out to the exteriors, interiors, fittings, furnishings and sacred objects of Worcestershire's churches are described in detail and the incumbents and patrons named and shamed. The Dean and Chapter of Worcester bore the brunt of his wrath, particularly for the restoration of Worcester Cathedral (1863–64; 1868 and 1874) carried out by Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878), in which Willis Bund suggests they "tried to realize the apocalyptic vision and 'made all things new'" (Willis Bund 1908: 18). St. Michael's was not among those restored churches within Worcestershire that Bund felt impelled to condemn. This was perhaps due to the intervention of Cossins, who noted:

> I constantly find that, with the best intentions, to preserve, clergymen, almost beyond all other men, have the most unsound views as to reparation, but that they generally come around to a surprising extent when they understand more fully what "restoration" is not (SPAB: 07-10-1892)

Nonetheless, many of the alterations carried out at Cropthorne are similar to those denounced by Willis Bund, in particular the moving of ancient memorials to the dead. He wrote:

> that restoration almost always leads to the removal of some "frail memorial" usually on the ground of the convenience of the incumbent at the time of the restoration. It can never be too often repeated that, whatever his legal rights may be, an incumbent should not be allowed to treat with contumely the memorials of past parishioners (Willis Bund 1908: 17).

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Notable memorials of past parishioners in Cropthorne church include the tombs of the Dineley (or Dingley) family, who held the Manor of Charlton from the 14th to the end of the 18th century (Noake 1851: 334-343). On the north wall of the north aisle is a tomb showing the recumbent figures of Francis Dineley (d.1624) and his wife Elizabeth: their

nineteen children are depicted as "weepers" (*pleurants*) around the base. Pevsner, at his most Pevsnerian, comments "it is a poor job" (Pevsner, 1968, 128-9). The second Dineley tomb is a memorial to Francis Dineley's grandson and heir, Edward Dineley (d. 1646) and his family. Standing "obliquely in the first bay of the north arcade", this tomb is not in its original position and "was probably removed from the chancel" (Barnard 1926-7: 67)[figure 2]. Its position presented serious problems for the restoration, though Turner and the Committee of the SPAB suggested that "those who put it there considered it a satisfactory place":

> […] it is just such features as this which mark the difference between ancient buildings and modern ones. The Committee then begs you not to countenance its removal (SPAB: 01-10-1892).

However, a cut which had been made into the chancel arch to accommodate the full height of the memorial eventually "caused a settlement on the east side, threatening serious results both to the structure of the Church and the tomb" (Barnard 1926-7: 67). As a result the Dineley memorial was lowered by eight inches and repaired during the second phase of restoration works in 1906. Two more photographs from *The Cropthorne Camera of Minnie Holland 1892-1905* (Cornell et al 1985:85-89) show the repositioned tomb and the neo-Medieval chancel immediately *after* the rebuilding in 1894. Here, the English oak-beamed ceiling recommended by Turner (SPAB 01-10-1892), hand-carved choir stalls and brass oil lamps have transformed its appearance [figure 6]. The most striking alteration is the insertion of new stained glass in the east window, probably made by Hardman of Birmingham (Fisher 2008), which depicts the Ascension and includes the appropriate Biblical quote in Gothic script: "And it came to pass while He blessed them He was parted from them and carried up into Heaven" (Luke 24:51).

Willis Bund was particularly enraged by modern stained glass which he condemned as "really too bad for description" and "beneath contempt" (Willis Bund 1908: 12).

Repeating scurrilous rumor he explained the political machinations in Worcestershire that the new windows obscured:

> Many of the windows were given by a gentleman who was a large landowner and represented a division of the county in Parliament. He was, as a matter of course, asked to contribute to all church restorations. Being somewhat a vain man, and also for election purposes, he liked his gifts to be seen of men, so they usually took the form of a stained-glass window, which was presumed to represent a cash donation of from £200 to £300. His generosity was greatly appreciated. It, however, leaked out that all his windows came from the same firm and that this "liberal" (I am not using the word politically) member had an arrangement with the firm to take all the windows of which they could not otherwise dispose at a very large discount, between 30 and 40 per cent. Bearing this in mind, one is not surprised to see the very miscellaneous assortment of windows with which the Worcestershire churches are defiled (Willis Bund 1908: 12-13).

There is no evidence to suggest that anyone other than Francis Holland contributed to the cost of rebuilding the chancel at Cropthorne: the figure given by the local newspapers is £484 with an additional £65 for "new oak stalls and seats in the chancel"; the upper panels of which were carved by the Misses Holland (*Berrow's* July 16, 1910: 2). A small wooden plaque records their efforts and a similar dedication plaque notes the gift of altar rails, given in 1963 by Mrs. Slaughter, a grand-daughter of Mr. Holland, "in grateful memory of the Holland Family of Cropthorne Court 1855 to 1920" (NADFAS 1999-2000: 346-7). Memorials to the Holland family, who were resident in the village for only 65 years, dominate the chancel effectively appropriating the most sacred space within the church; the largest being the carved stone reredos behind the altar, which was erected in 1909.

On 3rd August 1907 "the death of Mr. F. D. Holland, J. P., of Cropthorne Court" was reported in *Berrow's Worcester Journal* (*Berrow's* August 03, 1907: 2). Two years later, in October 1909 a Vestry Meeting considered proposals from the Holland family for a reredos in memory of F. D. Holland and his youngest daughter Alice, who had died in 1908. Having examined the design [figure 7], the Vestry agreed that "no impediment be offered to the erection of the proposed memorial reredos" as they were "of the opinion that it will add considerably to the beauty of the edifice" (WAAS: Cropthorne BA 3008: 21-10-1909).

Noting that "The Reredos was erected by his Children", its elaborate carving and inscriptions also record that "The Chancel was rebuilt by Francis D. Holland of Cropthorne Court, Lay Rector 1893": interestingly the Reverend Wilkinson is also named. This stone reredos forms part of a memorial narrative, which was to continue in October 1924 when another Petition was made by Minnie Holland, one of the last surviving members of the family, who "desired to place two figures in Alabaster in the center panel" of the reredos as a memorial to her mother, the late Ann Fletcher Holland. This design for the alabaster figures [figure 8] representing "Christ and an Angel" were duly approved and later installed: at the same time inscriptions were added to the reredos to record the deaths of Miss Holland's siblings (WAAS: 850 Cropthorne BA 9085/5 (iv) 3: 15-11-1924).

The chancel was part of the church which provoked more discussion than any other in the heated liturgical, ecclesiological and architectural debates surrounding the rebuilding and decoration of the Anglican Church throughout the nineteenth century: its restoration often indicated "a High Church programme" (Brooks 1995: 64). At Cropthorne, the rebuilding was less concerned with liturgy and ritual than asserting authority; responsibility for the most prestigious part of the building, once seen as an irksome burden, was now claimed as an ancestral right. It may have begun as a demonstration of paternalist power, but the restoration of the chancel at St. Michael's

was to end as an "elegy, a dynastic chapel that could only function retrospectively" (Brooks 1995: 70).

The church

The chancel was demolished and rebuilt in less than two years; its refurbishment, paid for entirely by Francis Holland, was celebrated by a Re-dedication Ceremony held in 1898 (Mance 1963: 3). Partly because of the abolition of the Compulsory Church Rate and changes in land-ownership in the 1860s, but also reflecting the difficulties in raising funds in a small village, the restoration of the rest of Cropthorne church took more than eighteen years to complete. The work was carried out in two phases: the first during 1893-94 and the second from 1906 until the Bishop of Worcester re-opened the church for worship in July 1910. Interestingly, a photograph of St. Michael's from the Francis Frith Collection taken in 1901 [Figure 9] shows the church *after* the rebuilding of the chancel but *before* 1906, when, according to the *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, "a definite effort was commenced to raise funds to complete the work of repair" (*Berrow's* July 30, 1910: 2). .

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)

This lengthy Petition reveals both the poor state of repair of the church *and* the enormity of the task facing its new incumbent; not least the challenge of raising the funds needed to pay for the much needed repairs, as well as the desirable "alterations and improvements" proposed by the architect (WAAS: Cropthorne BA 3008: 03-06-1893).

Writing to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in January 1893, Mr. Wilkinson asked for financial assistance:

> The fabric is in a very dilapidated condition and the tower is unsafe. We have had the building thoroughly examined and reported on and some £2000 will be required to make everything good and weatherproof (ECE/7/1/30030: 03-01-1893).

Revealing the huge amount of money needed to complete the restoration, this was the first in a series of letters to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, whose replies demonstrate their reluctance to contribute more than was strictly proportionate to the income received from properties in Cropthorne. The Minutes of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners Estates Committee recorded it should be explained to the Vicar that:

> the property in this Parish in the possession of the Commissioners produces an income of only about £100 per annum and that the Commissioners would not feel at liberty to make contribution exceeding £25 towards the restoration of the Church (ECE/7/1/30030: 16-03-1893).

Nonetheless, the faculty for the proposed restoration was granted in July 1893 (WAAS: Cropthorne BA 3008: 03-06-1893) 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. Indeed, one of the Reverend Wilkinson's early letters to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners asked if the proposed £25 contribution could be paid immediately towards the Tower Fund "as that is by far the most necessary work, a good deal having to be done to it to render it safe and sound" (ECE/7/1/30030: 01-07-1893). In response to this request, the Commissioners wrote asking for an "estimated cost of executing the works to the Tower" (ECE/7/1/30030: 05-07-1893); Mr. Wilkinson's immediate reply stated that "the cost of Tower repairs (not including the bells or bell-frames) is £395" (ECE/7/1/30030: 07-07- 1893). Unfortunately, it appears that the Commissioners then decided to reduce their donation to the cost of the work; offering £10 to the Tower fund rather than £25 for the larger project (ECE/7/1/30030: 17-07-1893). This perhaps explains the tone of the Vicar's next letter, which he wrote fourteen years later, asking for the £25 offered initially:

> As far back as 17th March 1893 you kindly promised to give £25 towards the restoration fund of Cropthorne Church. We found it quite impossible to raise the whole amount required and were therefore obliged to undertake the work piecemeal. Since that date the Chancel has been rebuilt, the Tower strengthened and repaired, the Bells re-cast and re-hung, the ancient oak benches carefully repaired and an efficient heating apparatus put in, besides other smaller works of repair and altogether over £1500 has been spent or a little over £100 per annum. We are now raising funds to undertake the final work in reconstruction of the roofs of nave and aisles and repair of walls & pillars & clerestory, the estimated cost of which is £615 of which nearly £200 is collected or promised. My object in writing is to ask whether we may still consider the Commissioners promise (of 17th March 1893) to hold good when work is completed (ECE/7/1/30030: 18-04-1907).

However, more disappointment was to follow, for according to the procedures of Ecclesiastical Commissioners, funds could not be released until the work was completed and had been inspected by their Surveyors. In July 1910, the Vicar wrote for the final time:

> I am now able to inform you that the work of restoration of Cropthorne Church has been completed and that the Bishop of the Diocese comes to reopen it for worship tomorrow (Saturday) afternoon. The outlay has reached £631 which has nearly all been raised from private and other sources (ECE/7/1/30030: 22-07-1910).

These "private and other sources" seem to be a mixture of community fund-raising activities and private donations. Both forms of financial support are described in detail by the local newspapers, which listed substantial donations and reported upon popular

social events in aid of the restoration fund for St. Michael's church. The restoration was completed due largely to these fund-raising activities organized by Mr. Wilkinson. Indeed, in 1910 the *Berrow's Worcester Journal* noted that:

> Since the Rev. W. H. Wilkinson came to Cropthorne about eighteen years ago he has made many efforts to raise money for the restoration of the Old Parish Church and Wednesday's fête was in aid of the restoration fund. The work was commenced as far back as 1893 and has been continued up to the present time, as funds have permitted, with the exception of the time of the during the South African War and the King's Coronation year (*Berrow's* July 16, 1910: 2)

While the local newspapers publicly praised his efforts, the Vicar's private communications with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners reveal the difficulties he encountered. Their correspondence, which continued sporadically for seventeen years, demonstrated Mr. Wilkinson's perseverance, but resulted in a final contribution of only £10 from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in July 1910. However unsatisfactory this outcome was for the incumbent and parishioners of Cropthorne, the letters reveal the processes involved in obtaining money for the restoration project which had a profound effect upon the interior decoration and furnishing of the church.

Commented [LW5]: The essay primarily focuses on the fundraising for changes to the church. Is there a way to situate this in relationship to the interior? Otherwise, the interior gets lost.

Perhaps the most a visible and successful method of fund-raising was the village fête. Both the *Evesham Journal* and the *Berrow's Worcester Journal* advertised and reported upon these events. During the first phase of the restoration in May 1894, highlighting the "quality" intending to patronize the occasion, the *Evesham Journal* noted:

> Preparations are being made for a grand fancy fête and sale of work to be held in August out in the garden and orchards at Cropthorne Vicarage, under the Patronage of the Earl and Countess of Coventry, the Bishop of Worcester, Sir

> Edmund Lechmere, Sir Richard Temple and many others in aid of the restoration fund of Cropthorne Church (*Evesham Journal* May 26, 1894: 8).

Another fête, held in 1910, was recorded in detail by the *Berrow's Worcester Journal*. Providing a snap-shot of the day, it described the amusements and stalls; recorded the "graceful little speeches" given by Mrs. Ellis Holland; and, listed every member of the Fête Committee. It also catalogued the work to the church that had "already been completed and paid for" with the "total expended: £1,485 10s 6d" (*Berrow's* July 16, 1910: 2).

The article also noted that the cost of the contract for the final restoration works was estimated at £665 "of which amount £540 has already been raised" and that "it was hoped that the balance of £125 would be provided from the proceeds of the garden fête" (*Berrow's* July 16, 1910: 2).

Fêtes are one of the rare occasions where an entire village is likely to meet, but as Howard Newby has commented "even here socializing is often highly ritualized and rudimentary, as much symbolic as real" (Newby 1982: 171). Like the pseudo-*Gemeinschaft* of Harvest Festivals and Whitsun Parades discussed by James Obelkevich (1976: 158-161), village fêtes are a form of class-controlled entertainment, but (depending on your point of view), were also an excellent way of collecting money from the poor *or* allowing them to contribute.

The contribution of the poor is one of the romanticized themes of the address given by the Bishop of Worcester, who re-opened the church in July 1910. Recorded in the *Berrow's Worcester Journal* and demonstrating his "almost devout love for archaeology and Christian art", the Bishop's rousing sermon suggested that both "Englishness" and "Christianity" were embodied in the parish church; he also referred to "the attachment of the poor to their village churches":

> When a church was restored they found the poor giving of their tiny means to the work, showing their love for their parish church [...] In eighteen years they had spent £2,000 on their House of God, and although they had had some generous donors, who had done well, yet it was perhaps the glory of that work that the chief portion of it had been done by efforts and offerings in other ways, many poor people helping (*Berrow's* July 30, 1910: 2).

While the poor of the village may have indeed contributed to the restoration funds, the "giving of their tiny means" is anonymous, unlike the labeled commemorative objects which indicate much larger donations. Chris Brooks, in stressing the importance of oligarchic funding in church restoration during this period, highlights the role of "the subscription list", which was "almost always dominated by a handful of local land-owners" (Brooks 1995:60). The subscription list compiled by Mr. Wilkinson for the Ecclesiastical Commissioners exemplified this method of fund-raising and recorded the sums given by the wealthier residents of Cropthorne.

At the bottom of his "List of subscriptions promised towards the Church restoration fund" Mr. Wilkinson noted he had "not yet appealed to anyone having no interest in the Parish, my desire being before doing so to have a list to put before them of what landowners are doing" (ECE/7/1/30030: 07-03-1893). Although most of the subscribers were landholders in the parish, the wealth of several more recent "incomers" came from "professional fees, from commerce, from trade – from the occupations that is of the successful middle classes" (Brooks 1995; 73).

An effective method of raising money, oligarchic funding was rarely invisible and usually resulted in the conversion of church fittings into commemorative objects:

> [...] lecterns, clergy desks and choir stalls, pulpits, reredoses and, most of all perhaps, stained-glass windows – each object carefully accompanied by its

> memorial label, its tag of date and donor. Such a plethora of personal signs, each in effect appropriating a bit of the church to an individual or a family, connotes the appropriation of the church as a whole by the funding oligarchy (Brooks 1995: 73).

At St. Michael's, there are several such personal signs that were incorporated, complete with their individual memorial labels, into the interior of the newly restored church, including two objects presented during the Dedication Ceremony: the Jacobean chair given by Mr. C. F. Stratton, a former-Churchwarden and the brass lectern which is inscribed: "To the glory of God and in loving memory of Robert Sanders, Vicar of this parish for 38 years Presented by his widow and children" (NADFAS 1999-2000: 130). Before the restoration work had even finished other 'personal signs' were also added to the walls as the village of Cropthorne began to mourn its war dead Marking a moment of British Imperialism, the earliest of these is a small brass plaque erected by Lieutenant-Colonel Walter Holland, the squire's eldest son, in memory of Private Thomas Forrester of the 2nd Worcestershire Regiment 'who laid down his life for his country at Newcastle South Africa March 13th 1901' (WMA 32809). Just beneath this memorial, a second brass wall plaque is dedicated to the memory of Corporal Daniel Tarplee of the 'Royal Field Artillery who served through the Boer War 1899-1901 and died at Cropthorne Jany 12th 1904 from illness contracted During the Siege of Ladysmith'(WMA – 32810). Throughout the twentieth century other war memorials would be added to the interior of the Church and its environs.

The use of memorials to appropriate space within St. Michael's was a strategy employed by others with far less right to a place in the Parish church. In 1927, the widowed Mrs. Dineley applied for a Faculty to install a stone tablet featuring an heraldic device designed by the artist and architect, Frederick Etchells (1886-1973) in memory of her late-husband, Francis Goodyere Dineley (d. 1908) [figure 10]. Commander Dineley, who claimed descent from Edward Dineley, had borne the costs of moving and repairing the

Dineley tomb in 1906. However, the surviving correspondence suggests that the Vicar and his Churchwardens were less than enthusiastic about this addition to their church; the Dineleys lived in Shaftesbury and their historical connection with the Parish of Cropthorne seemed tenuous at best. A hand-written note initialed "G. W." found with the correspondence in the Diocesan records commented: "The faculty case herewith is one in which I should want to say: a fine old church is not an advertisement hoarding" (WAAS: Cropthorne BA 3008: c. 1927). After much negotiating, the memorial tablet was installed, reclaiming a small space on the north wall of the north aisle for the Dineley family; its proximity to the recumbent tomb of Francis Dineley and the use of heraldry reinforcing the genealogy.

Appropriating space within the church, these commemorative objects are inscribed to the memory of individuals and families. Ten years later a communal memorial on a much larger scale would be needed to remember those men who fell far from home. Elsewhere I have discussed the story of the church clock, installed in 1920 "in grateful memory of the 12 men who gave their lives for their country in the Great War 1914-1918" (WMA: 3144); this forms another chapter in the unfolding narrative of this ancient building which alters its interior space and adds another layer of meaning.. (Ferry 2016)

This account of the rebuilding of the chancel and the restoration of the church has highlighted different themes in an on-going narrative; the alterations reflecting profound social, economic, political, religious and cultural changes. The interior of the church was transformed in part as a result of the Victorian religious revival and an increased interest in ritualism; yet it was also shaped by the power of agricultural capitalism and the paternalism associated with land-ownership. Some of the alterations demonstrate the emergence of heritage tourism and measures to preserve historic artefacts, such as the Anglo-Saxon cross and the medieval benches. Others were displays of decorative and practical objects manufactured in the factories and workshops of industrial England including the new stained glass window and the much vaunted 'heating apparatus';

Commented [LW6]: It would be helpful to place greater emphasis on these areas as they show up in the essay. At present, the interior and its elements are secondary to other pieces such as the funding for the church.

decorative pipe coil heaters possibly manufactured by Jones and Attwood of Stourbridge (Hevac 2003). The walls of St. Michael's record both private loss and commemorate the impact of global warfare upon a small rural community: all brief moments in time that have left lasting physical traces upon this space of faith.

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Figures:

Figure 1
Cropthorne, near Evesham, Worcestershire
Watercolour by A. R. Quinton, c. 1912
Published in Peter Ditchfield, 1912 *The Cottages and the Village Life of Rural England*

Figure 2
Cropthorne Cottages – The Interior of Cropthorne Church
Photograph c. 1904
Published in Josephine Tozier, 1904 *Among English Inns: the Story of a Pilgrimage to Characteristic Spots of Rural England,* Boston: L. C. Page & Company, pp. 99-100

Figure 3
St. Michael's Church, Cropthorne, Worcestershire: Plan shewing original seating
Jethro Anstice Cossins (1830-1917)
ICBS: 09938
Reproduced courtesy of Lambeth Palace Library

Figure 4
St. Michael's Church, Cropthorne at Harvest, photographed c. 1890
Reproduced in Cornell et al, *The Cropthorne Camera of Minnie Holland 1892-1905,*
Torpoint: Kawabata Press, 1985, p.85

Figure 5
'Cropthorn, Worcs' [sic]
Water-color by Thomas Richards; Cartwright Aquat., c. 1815
Reproduced courtesy of the Prattinton Collection Royal Society of Antiquaries, Piccadilly, London

Figure 6
The Rebuilt Chancel St. Michael's Church, Cropthorne, photographed c. 1894
Reproduced in Cornell et al, *The Cropthorne Camera of Minnie Holland 1892-1905,*
Torpoint: Kawabata Press, 1985, p.91

Figure 7
Design for the Stone Reredos in Memory of F. D. Holland and Alice Holland, c. 1909
Digital Scan: May 2009
Reproduced with the kind permission of the Bishop and Diocese of Worcester and Worcestershire Archive and Archaeological Service

Figure 8
Design for alabaster figures of Christ and an Angel holding a chalice, 1924
R. L. Boulton & Sons of Cheltenham, 'ecclesiastical and architectural sculptors, modellers and carvers'
Digital Scan: May 2009
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Figure 9
St. Michael's Church, Cropthorne, Worcestershire
Photograph 1901
Francis Frith Collection: Ref. 4332

Figure 10
Design for Stone Memorial Tablet in memory of Commander Francis Goodyere Dineley RN by Frederick Etchells, F.R.I.B.A. for Mrs E. M. Dineley of Shaftesbury, 1927