



## About St Michael's

St Michael's stands in the centre of the village beside the road which used to form the county boundary between Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. The settlement name means 'fern-covered pasture'. The parish, consisting of only 672 acres, was divided between three minor tenants at the date of Domesday Book (1086) and continued to change hands quite frequently. The patronage of the church was passed down with the largest of the three manors.

The first mention of this church is in 1254, but what now stands was essentially built in the period 1180–1220. The doorways are of this period but all the windows have been renewed in two campaigns. The first phase was in the Decorated style of the 14th century with the windows in the nave north wall and south wall near the west end and the chancel south window. The second phase was in the 15th century with the chancel east window, the nave west window and that in the nave south wall near the east end. Later in the century the tower was built within the west end. Local stone was used: pale beige limestone for most of the walling and blocks of dark brown ironstone for some corner stones and contrasting detail. Apart from the font no medieval furnishings survive. All the furniture and stained glass is of Victorian restorations from 1846 onwards.

Maintaining an ancient church in such a small village became impossible and the church was closed in 1970. Four years later St Michael's was vested in The Churches Conservation Trust to be preserved as part of the nation's heritage. The Trust undertook necessary repairs to improve drainage.

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The Churches Conservation Trust is the national charity protecting historic churches at risk.

We've saved over 340 beautiful buildings which attract almost 2 million visitors a year.

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### Access

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

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your church tour

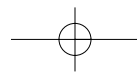


Church of  
St Michael

Farndish, Bedfordshire



THE CHURCHES  
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1 The **nave** is a late Norman structure though its windows are all later. The low-pitched roof is 15th century and is recorded as having painted rafters. The seating dates from the 1846 restoration with two box pews on the south side for the gentry, open benches on the north side for the villagers and more benches at the back for children. All the seating is carved in an ornate Gothic style, though the use of box pews at this late date is very conservative. The pulpit, lectern and **clergy chairs** are also of this date. A number of ledger stones in the nave floor and also wall plaques mainly commemorate members of the Alderman family.



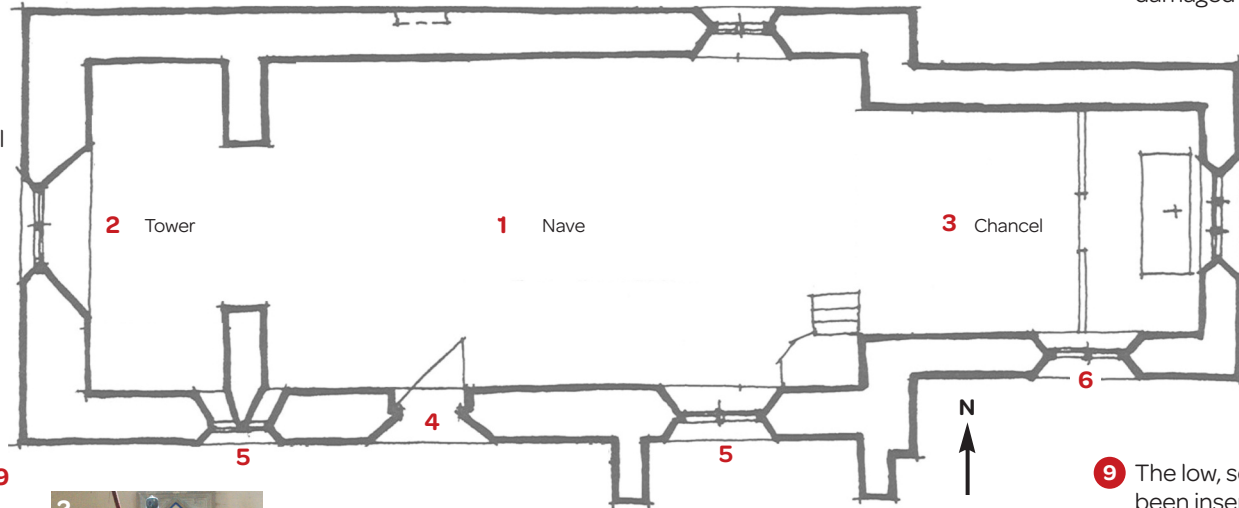
4 The **south doorway** is the finest feature of the church. It has three orders or rows of columns of which only middle one is attached to the wall. The capitals (decorated tops of the columns) have stiff-leaf ornament. These support three orders of plain arches, their stones alternately beige limestone and dark brown ironstone. The keystone of the outer arch has radiating lines for a medieval sundial. This mass dial or scratch dial would have enabled people to tell the hours and to determine the times of services before the days of clocks. The doorway remains in a fine state of preservation because it was protected by a porch until 1823.



6 The **chancel south window** is in similar Decorated style but the carved heads appear to be reused Norman work. There is some contrasting stone. Left of this window two vertically-set stones mark the sides of a low-side window, used by the clergy to ring the sanctus bell at the culmination of the Mass. Such a 'saint bell' is recorded here in 1552 and 1822.

7 The **east window** is a simple three-light 15th-century opening, but above it are the remains of an ornately-carved gable cross with figures and foliage. Another damaged cross stands on the east gable of the nave.

2 The tower arch partially blocks a pre-existing window. There is a circular 13th-century **font**, though the Victorian font-cover is octagonal and is prettily decorated with an inscription and painted designs of Victorian date. On the north and south walls are two **boards** with the Ten Commandments, Creed and Lord's Prayer (normally hung on the chancel east wall). On the west wall is a late Victorian ceramic tile with the **Royal Arms** set into a square moulded stone frame. This would have replaced a board or canvas hung over the chancel arch.



8 The **north wall** of the nave has a two-light Decorated (early 14th-century) window and a plain pointed doorway (now blocked). Neither has any ornamental carving.

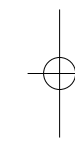
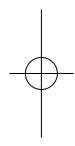
3 The **chancel** is entered through a plain Norman arch, its stonework concealed by plaster. All the fittings are Victorian including the sanctuary pavement in imitation of a Roman villa mosaic. The stained glass in the east window (The Crucifixion) is of 1846 (cover) and was given by William Adcock, who paid for the 1846 restoration; that in the south (Sayings of Jesus) is of 1858. The makers' names are not recorded. On the floor is a brass shield and inscription in Latin to a former rector, John Johnson, who died in 1625, aged nearly 100.



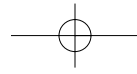
5 The **windows** on the south side are ornately decorated. That to the west (left) of the door is earlier with an ogee (double S)-shaped head. That to the east is in a later style with a broader head and some use of contrasting stone as in the south doorway. The projecting stonework (hood mouldings) over the windows terminate in well carved heads or foliage.



9 The low, square **tower** has been inserted into the west end and rises a short distance above the nave roof. It contains simple window openings and has a plain parapet. It was previously capped by a pyramidal lead roof with a miniature spire or spike supporting the weathervane. This was removed in about 1850. The tower houses three bells: the treble dated 1663; the 2nd 1625 and the tenor 1597.



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