

## St Michael and All Angel's, Highworth

The Parish Church of Highworth is dedicated to St Michael and dates from the mid 15th century. It consists of a chancel with north and south chapels, nave of five bays, south porch, aisles, transepts, sculptured gargoyles and a western tower. Within the church is a richly carved Elizabethan pulpit and the font (dating from the 15th century) is carved with shields and flowers. On the chancel is an angel, man and mermaid and there is fan-vaulting on the tower ceiling. The mediaeval chalice and paten date from 1534 and instead of a Crucifix on the foot, there "is an almost nude seated figure with legs crossed, bearing a palm, symbolical of the Man of Sorrows or the Crowning with Thorns." The south chapel is the mausoleum of the Warnefords of Sevenhampton with a tablet in memory of Flight Sub-Lieutenant Reginald Alexander John Warneford, VC, RNAS killed in WW1 aged 23. He singlehandedly pursued and destroyed a German Zeppelin, near Ghent (Belgium) on the 7th June, 1915. Pieces of ancient armour are also suspended in this chapel. In another part of the church is a mural tablet, commemorating Sir John Croft, Bart, of Croft Castle, Herefordshire and Dunstan Park, in Berkshire, who died in 1797 and was buried here. During the civil war on the 27th June, 1645, government troops on their way to Taunton drew up before the fortified church where Major Hen (governor of the royal garrison here) was summoned to surrender. He yielded after a short resistance and "the besiegers took seventy prisoners, with arms and a considerable booty." The mark of a cannonball is still discernible on the church. In a field west of the church, a "vast number of skeletons in high preservation was discovered, imbedded in the sand at the depth of five feet." In the fourteenth century, Highworth Manor belonged to Edmund de Langley, Duke of York, the fourth son of King Edward the third. Afterwards it was held by the family of St John of Liddiard Tregoze; Oliver St John, Viscount Grandison in Ireland was made an English peer by Charles the first with the title of Baron Tregoze of Highworth. The Manor was owned by Lord Chedworth and after his death it was sold to the present proprietor Mr Crowdy, a solicitor.

*"Highworth and District Official Guide" Highworth Rural District Council 1956*

*"Lewis's Topographical Dictionary of England" 1848*

*"The Beauties of Wiltshire: Displayed in Statistical, Historical and Descriptive Sketches... Vol 3" 1825 John Britton*