



fly the flyer

Work funded by The Friends

Chris Dawes

As evidenced by the piece and photos on page three we had some fun at the Annual Dinner and... now for the hard work!

The Friends of St Michael's exists 'to assist the PCC (Parochial Church Council) in the preservation, repair, maintenance and improvement of St Michael's and to promote its use for cultural and community events'. Fortunately these two aims are cleverly and entertainingly united in the stimulating and fun events which colleagues put on in the church.

One such event is the Annual Dinner and I mentioned in my speech this year the serious work being supported through your membership and your contributions to those events, but all members (dined or undined) may like

an update about what you are achieving through your Friendship.

The focus of our work currently is the Bodley (earlier, smaller) church, eloquently described by Simon Jenkins as a French motet ('To pass from Bodley to Burges is to pass from a French motet to a Handel oratorio'), although



I understand it is considered more Italian than French Gothic, which indeed makes sense in the context of the housing in the Montpellier and Clifton area.

Works to the church are generally planned in

accordance with priorities established in the Quinquennial Inspection Report (QIR) commissioned by the PCC, the last of which was completed in October 2013. Friends' funds can help support schemes identified in the QIR which are too costly for or outwith the scope of church funds or to meet unexpected emergencies. Our focus is on the schemes most essential to the special historical and artistic features of this extraordinary building.

We were therefore pleased to contribute £2,000 towards the restoration of the clerestory windows in the chancel of the Bodley church, work on which has now been completed, and £500 towards the Carthy Conservation survey, currently being written up. The problems generally derive from the effects of our prevailing Brightonian south-westerly wind carrying salt sea-water and rain, first attacking the glazing and then through its breaches the very stonework of the church. The Carthy survey is principally looking at the painted ceiling by Philip Webb, the damaged decorative stonework and plaster work above the altar and beneath the windows, but also the Minton-tiled floor and corroded metal work (e.g. the gates at the entrance and the cross above). It is also looking at possible restoration of the wallpaper paintings, thus furthering the stabilising work already done by the Friends.



The QIR identifies some longer-term projects, such as re-roofing, but also future repairs which are currently difficult to fund, notably improvements to the lighting and cleaning and restoration of the faded reredos (designed by Romaine-Walker in 1914) in the Burges church. The Friends have been especially interested in the lighting, which could greatly enhance the enjoyment of important features of the church though the chancel first needs to look in good order if new lighting is to be installed, not least to illuminate the ceiling. We commissioned from an expert lighting designer a report on a possible lighting scheme for the Bodley church, to give an indication of what might be achieved with a well-designed modern and efficient lighting scheme, and our former chair, John Cox, identified a source for

chandeliers to replace those currently at the back of the church. The PCC has itself contracted examination of a scheme for the whole church and the Friends are keen that the proposals are considered side-by-side and, given the high cost – perhaps £100,000 - the possibility of a phased project examined. The costs might be shared between the PCC, in recognition of its advantages for church purposes, and the Friends. We might also examine the possibility of a grant, though the previous English Heritage scheme, from which St Michael's benefited in the past, has been wound up following public expenditure cuts.

The Friends have also agreed in principle to support the production of a special guide to the magnificent stained glass of the church and will consider other projects such as a vitrine for the church vestments or repair of the

church bell, which came from Sebastopol, and altar frontals. Personally, I find the lighting project particularly exciting as it could do so much to enhance appreciation of St Michael's special features and I am interested to hear more about the possibility of a case to display the vestments. Last year I saw the extraordinary vestments designed by Matisse for use – and still used - in his chapel at Vence, which - combined - form one of the most extraordinary aesthetic and spiritual ensembles I have seen. Some Friends will no doubt have seen two of his designs for the vestments which were included in the recent Tate Modern exhibition 'Henri Matisse: the Cut-Outs.'

So please do continue to help: come and enjoy Friends' events and encourage friends to join us!

A highly successful dinner

Helen Simpson

It was still daylight as we gathered inside the so-called Cathedral of the back streets and as the evening began we could admire the stained glass windows and stone carvings for which the church is so well known. The nave was most attractively laid out with circular tables and subtle lighting added to a very pleasant dining space.

Father Robert welcomed the company of Friends to the community church that is St Michael's assuring those of us for whom this was their first such dinner, that to eat and drink there is in accordance with the spirit of the church as recorded through history. The Chair of The Friends, Chris Dawes also spoke and later, between courses, took time to note his

long term interest in this church and its neighbourhood.

I was struck as a Brighton resident of some years but not immediately local, by the very congenial atmosphere and obvious goodwill expressed in many ways towards newcomers. The placing of everyone at tables had been carefully thought out and a 'leader', who incidentally carved and served our food kept an eye on the dynamics between us. Our table re-seated the men between courses, 'to avoid things becoming too cosy!' The splendid four course meal was served beautifully and had been prepared marvellously by members of the Friends. An enormous amount of work had taken place in order for this dinner to be so successful.

Stop Press: Thanks to organiser Jane Osler and her team as well as those who attended, the Dinner raised some £3,200, the raffle alone generating over £600.



Take a closer look

The Beanlands Chalice

David Beevers

Curator of the Royal Pavilion

Amongst the many treasures originally designed for St Michael and All Angels Church, the Beanlands chalice, named after the first perpetual curate, is outstanding.

Made in 1862 by John Hardman and Company of Birmingham, a firm of Roman Catholic 'medieval metalworkers', to the designs of William Burges, architect of the cathedral-like extensions to the church, the chalice is made from silver, silver-gilt, malachite, lapis-lazuli, agate, crystal, amethyst, topaz, turquoise, pearl, and precious and semi-precious stones, reputedly thrown into the collecting box by enthusiastic lady members of the congregation.

In 1858 Burges wrote: 'nothing can be too precious or too good for a chalice', and he felt that it was possible in a piece of goldsmith's work for an artist to apply 'the knowledge gained by wandering to and fro over the surface of the earth' to a small and intricate object which 'will have added another new and beautiful thing to the world'. In the Beanlands chalice Burges, as John Betjeman put it, 'went on from where the Middle Ages left off'.

A chalice is a cup used to contain the wine in the central act of worship in the Christian church known as the Eucharist, from the Greek for thanksgiving. The Eucharist was initiated by Christ at the Last Supper, where bread and wine were shared and blessed. At the moment of consecration, the wine in the

chalice becomes the blood of Christ and in consequence chalices are nearly always made of precious materials.

In the 19th century, the Church of England revived the medieval form of chalice with a wide shallow cup on a short stem and spreading foot.

The complex iconography of the Beanlands chalice reflects Burges's profound knowledge of antiquity and the Middle Ages. The leaves (vesicas) of the calyx are engraved with seraphim with wings on wheels, a Byzantine motif. The foot is engraved with symbolic representations of the Four Rivers of Paradise (Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel, Euphrates), the Tree of Life, the Tree of Knowledge, and the Heavenly Jerusalem which had 'a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels... which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel'. The twelve gates were each formed of a single pearl, hence the expression 'pearly gates' (Revelation, 21:12).



Inscribed around the foot are the words from an 8th century *Hymn for the Dedication of a Church*: 'Urbs beata Hierusalem dicta pacis visio quae construitur in coelis vivis ex lapidibus' (Blessed city of Jerusalem, vision of an assurance of peace, built in heaven out of living stone).

This glittering, astonishingly learned, and beautiful object crystallises Burges's ability to invoke romantically his own dream of the Middle Ages. He has here created in miniature a Gothic Revival masterpiece.

Although used very occasionally the St Michael's chalice is, as with other such items owned by churches, kept securely off site. A similar Burges chalice (lent by St Andrews, Kingsbury) is on display at the V&A Museum.

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Dates for your diary

Sue Berry's talk scheduled for 5 September has been postponed until 13 March

Friday 12 September 6.30 for 7.00 p.m.

Moving Interiors

Dr Alexandra Loske, art historian and curator

As part of the BBC's series *Great British Railway Journeys* Alexandra recently discussed the removal of most of the interiors of the Royal Pavilion by Queen Victoria in the 1840s with Michael Portillo. She also appeared with designer Tim Gosling at an event at the Masterpiece Fair in London, where she talked about what happened to individual objects and whole interiors once they had left the building. In this talk Alexandra will focus on both these aspects,

*Tickets (with glass of wine):
in advance Friends £6; Guests £7;
on the door Friends £7 Guests £8
Booking via Ann Smith
ann@friendsofsaintmichaels.co.uk*

Saturday 11 October 2014 2.30 for 3.00 p.m.

The Annual Lecture

Maxwell Hutchinson

Architect, television broadcaster, writer and composer.

He has appeared on countless radio and television programmes covering architecture, lifestyle and London life.

He also runs his own successful architecture practice. Unafraid of controversy, Maxwell attacked Prince Charles for his criticism of modern British architecture - a move which secured him the presidency of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Maxwell is founder of "Article 25", a charity he set up after surviving the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka.



Friday 7 November 2014 7.00 for 7.30 p.m.

Gipsy jazz with fish and chips

Friday 6 February 2015

Icicles party

A free, Friends only event

Friday 13 March 2015

Brighton 1750-1820: the rise of England's most famous resort

Sue Berry, Associate Fellow of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London

March 2015

Exploring the hidden treasures of St Michael's

David Beevers, Curator of the Royal Pavilion
Tour of the church followed by lunch
A 'Friends only' event. £6 inc lunch

Sat in May/June/Aug 2015

Ladies lunch

Saturday 20 June 2015

Annual dinner

Sunday 21 June 2015

Conversazione

September 2015

Social event

October 2015

Annual lecture

November 2015

The world of opera: a reminiscence

John Cox, renowned opera director and former Chair of The Friends

Free for Friends; £12 for non-Friends who will gain free entry if they join the Friends at a cost of £15. No advance booking

First Impressions

Rosemary George M.W. wine writer

What a welcome. A parishioner was celebrating a significant birthday and her friends had gathered after the morning service for cake and sparkling wine. We were invited to join them, with a glass of Cava rosado, which we happily accepted. The warmth of the atmosphere of St. Michael's was immediately apparent.



The first thing that struck me about St. Michael's was the solid Victorian red brick. We walked past the stucco houses of Powis Square, which form such a sharp contrast to the confident structure in the corner of the square. This is a church that was built, and subsequently enlarged, as Brighton

expanded and it has always been sure of its sense of place in the community. My old school friend, Alison, had enthused about the Pre-Raphaelite windows. You don't need me to describe them to you. All I can say is that they more than rewarded the journey from London. I enjoyed the flowing locks and the richly coloured robes and the detail in the scenes. I would have loved to have been able to look at them more closely than is possible in a church.

And there is much else besides to enjoy, such as the animals carved on the choir stalls, the pair of frogs, and the bird catching a worm, and the capitals portraying the two sisters, who were rescued from the Indian mutiny. One of the parishioners, who is well versed in the history of the church pointed out further details, the painted candlesticks and the Charles I bible. And as a wine writer, I shall of course remember my visit for the only time that I have been offered a full glass of wine in church, rather than a sip from the chalice.

Think you know the Pre-Raphaelites?

Tate Britain takes a fascinating look at some little-known facts about the Pre-Raphaelites and busts some myths about the Victorian group

<http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/think-you-know-pre-raphaelites>

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Photographs in this edition: Gabi Tubbs, Martin Knott, Mike Fearey