



# the flyer

## New challenges

### The chancel in the Bodley church

St Michael's has just undergone its quinquennial inspection.

Within the Church of England each church building must be inspected every five years by an approved architect or chartered building surveyor to ensure it is kept in good repair.

Clergy and officers will meet soon with the architect and other specialists to consider their report and to make recommendations to the Parochial Church Council on conservation projects.

The priority is likely to be the chancel of the Bodley [or 'old'] church, with attention mainly to stonework, plasterwork and lighting the Pre-Raphaelite ceiling.

After these discussions with experts are completed and reports produced, the Friends will consult the Parochial Church Council to determine how best they might help.

### More storm damage

The gale force winds have once more taken their toll. Restoration work, supported by the Friends, has saved the great west window but the south windows, facing Victoria Road, are in a parlous state.

In an interview with the Flyer, Father Robert assessed the damage: 'We are concerned that after the recent storms one window in the Bodley chancel has blown in and had to be fully removed, another is rattling badly and there are signs of others coming loose. This will entail a glass conservator being called in and restoration of stonework.'

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## The Friends produce a Guide for Visitors

The Friends have produced a new guide to St Michael's to be available free to its many visitors. The guide provides a plan of the church and brief notes on the win-

dows and other features. It welcomes visitors, giving information on times of services, the work of The Friends, music in the church and community activities.

# Mary Merrifield of Brighton

and 19<sup>th</sup> Century influences on Pre-Raphaelite colour

## Alexandra Loske



Art Historian at the University of Sussex and the Royal Pavilion

The windows in St Michael's are frequently cited as evidence of the Pre-Raphaelites' quest to return to the great tradition of mediaeval stained glass. But Pre-Raphaelite colour, seen at its best in St Michael's, cannot be understood simply as a return to tradition. It was greatly influenced by ideas about the use of colour in art and architecture which emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Secular and non-secular interiors were beginning to become more experimental and daring with regard to colour. Indeed the concept of interior design as an art form was being established around this time. At the academies, too, colour gained importance, with J.M.W. Turner being one of the first painters to emphasise colour over design.

### The colourmen

This interest in colour was to no small extent fuelled by the invention and large-scale production of many new pigments, for example chrome yellow, blue verditer, cobalt blue, and a number of highly toxic greens. Many so called 'colourmen' provided recipes, tools and raw materials for

pigment production, or sold ready-made pigments and paints.

One of the most important British colourmen was George Field (c.1777–1854). He published his first book on colour in 1817 and his writing spanned the Georgian and Victorian ages.

Field gained the unrivalled status of the most important colour researcher and colour maker of the nineteenth century. From 1808 he began supplying pigments to artists, other colourmen, artists' suppliers, printers and publishers, for example Rudolph Ackermann and Winsor & Newton.



Vintage pigment jars

Field's pigments were used and praised by the colour-loving Pre-Raphaelites (in particular William Holman-Hunt and John Everett Millais).

### The Brighton connection

By the mid-nineteenth century discussions about the status and role of colour in art had clearly moved on to the field of architectural colour and decoration. There is a strong Brighton connection through the work of writer Mary Philadelphia Merrifield (1804–1889) who lived in Brighton for most of her adult life. A number of her books were first published here.

Merrifield was invited to provide an essay on the colour scheme for the interiors of the Crystal Palace, site of the *Great Exhibition* of 1851, to which she gave the title

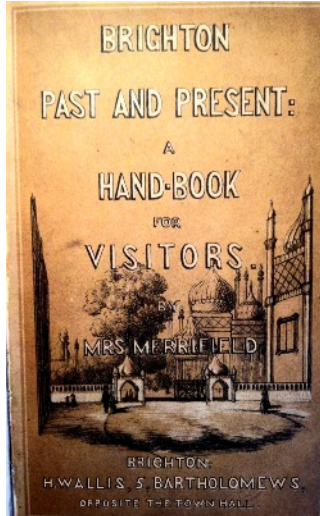
'The Harmony of Colours'. In it she argued that the the same principles of harmony apply to painting a picture and designing interiors or decorative objects.

Merrifield published widely in journals in Britain and America but perhaps the most accessible and endearing of her works is a Brighton handbook for visitors, *Brighton – Past and Present*, published in 1857.

### In praise of Brighton

Merrifield had many good things to say about Brighton, but what she praised most was the colour and light conditions, which, in her opinion, are the equal

of those found in Italy: *'Eastward ... the horizontal rays of the sun illuminate the figures seen on the cliff, bringing out the colours of their dresses and complexions with a fiery glow, which reminds one of the pictures of Giorgione; especially when contrasted with the cool blue grey of the eastern sky and the sea, which forms their background'*.



Those who have been to Venice, will at once perceive how much the effects of colour seen there resemble those beautiful combinations of colour so frequently witnessed at Brighton.'

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## Turner and Constable in Sussex

Alexandra Loske Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February

Judy Irwin reports

The church hall was filled with over 70 Friends and guests for this talk by Alexandra Loske, an art historian, specialising in 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century art and architecture.

Always popular with The Friends, Alexandra once again treated us to an entertaining and illuminating insight into the world of art.

Although contemporaries, Constable and Turner possibly never met, being rivals, even though both spent time in Brighton. Their personalities were completely different, and this influenced the art they produced.

Turner was single, well-travelled, adventurous and not afraid to experiment with colour, particularly yellow - a col-

our not always approved of by his critics. His work was considered to be 'idealised, spiritual & sublime'. He spent time in Brighton under the patronage of the Earl of Egremont and Mad Jack Fuller.

Constable, on the other hand, produced 'personal and emotional' work. He loved the Suffolk countryside of his home, his wife and seven children and chose to travel rarely. His wife contracted TB and it is thought that they came to Brighton for her health. She died in 1828, leaving him to raise the children alone, and further the dark moods expressed in his work.

The talk was illustrated with many pictures from both artists and was followed by a short question and answer session.

## Dates for your diary

### **Sat 29 March. 11.30am**

Connoisseur's Tour of the Burges Church followed by light lunch.

David Beever, Keeper, the Royal Pavilion  
£6 Friends only + one guest each.  
Advance booking only.

Tel: 01273328624;

Email: alanandandrew@btinternet.com

### **Sat 5 July. 7pm**

Friends' Annual Dinner

### **Sun 6 July. 3pm**

'Conversazione' and tea

### **Fri 5 September. 6.30pm**

Talk by Sue Berry

### **October.**

Friends' Annual Lecture

### **Fri 7 November 7.30pm**

Gipsy Jazz with food.

## Publications on St Michael's

The following publications are available in the church:

*Saint Michael and All Angels Brighton*  
(free leaflet)

*Become a Friend: Saint Michael and All Angels Brighton: A Pre-Raphaelite Jewel*  
(free leaflet)

*The Early Days of S. Michael's*  
by John Harrison and *A Miscellany* compiled by Canon Robert Fayers, SSC. 2012  
(free booklet)

*St Michael and All Angels Brighton*  
by David Beever. 2007 (booklet for sale)

*St Michael and All Angels: A Guide for Visitors* 2014 designed and published by The Friends of St Michael's (free leaflet)

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## Have you renewed your membership for 2014?

Annual Single £15 Couple £20  
Life: Single £150 Couple £200

Download a form from our website:

[www.friendsofsaintmichaels.co.uk/](http://www.friendsofsaintmichaels.co.uk/)  
Or

Send your name and address together with a cheque or bank Standing Order mandate to:

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## Why not introduce a friend?

We're always delighted to welcome new members and we'll be a livelier organisation.