Friends of St Michael's

Patron: Sir Roy Strong

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Summer 2012

Alexandra Loske and Sir Roy Strong at the dinner

Photo: D. Van Eerde

Guests at the dinner

Photo: T. Bailey

Charles Saumarez-Smith

Recent events: Annual dinner and Conversazione

This year's **Annual Dinner** was a great success – the best yet. It was over-subscribed, so we managed to squeeze in an extra table. One hundred guests enjoyed a delicious meal of dressed summer salmon, Sussex pork tenderloin with sauce Saint Michel, 150th Celebration pudding, cheeses, coffee and truffles. Many thanks to the team, co-ordinated by Ann Smith, who prepared and delivered a thoroughly enjoyable evening – and special thanks to Pauline Messum, Margy Nixon, and Simon Thompson for creating such a superb spread.

Our patron, Sir Roy Strong, gave a most engaging and witty after dinner speech. He lauded the fact that S. Michael's is both an important holy space and a place for secular rejoicing – as witnessed by Friday's dinner – a church that opens its doors to the wide community.

Sir Roy paid tribute to the Friends' fund raising efforts, whilst reminding us that to preserve, for posterity, the treasures of churches such as S. Michael's, substantial funds are required. He exhorted us to remember this in our wills!

The informal **Conversazione,** on 23 June, between Sir Roy and his friend and former colleague Charles Saumarez-Smith was also very well attended. Charles was a sensitive and intuitive interviewer, and led us through Sir Roy's outstanding career and diverse interests. As Director of the National Portrait Gallery in the 1960s, Sir Roy pulled this gallery out of the 'Dark Ages' with revolutionary zeal. He also gave us an animated and amusing account of events during his time at the V&A where, despite opposition from all quarters, he changed the museum profession for the better with new ways of thinking and exciting exhibitions. He laid the foundations for the achievements of the next generation of museum leaders, such as Charles Saumarez-Smith, who began his career at the V&A under Sir Roy.

After the conversation, members of the audience took the opportunity to pose a range of interesting questions to both speakers. This was followed by tea and homemade cakes, during which the discussion continued and Friends were able to catch up and chat. A good time was had by all.

Together, the Annual Dinner and Conversazione raised well over £4,000, which will go towards stabilising the magnificent Pre-Raphaelite West Window. As we know, this represents the apogee of Pre-Raphaelite stained glass in this country, but these special windows are in dire need of repair. Those who have attended services and other events at S. Michael's this summer will have heard them rattle alarmingly in the wind.

Continues...

Autumn Programme

Princess Charlotte

Photo: Royal Pavilion

Gown for Princess Charlotte's baby

Charlotte, the Forgotten Princess

Date *Fri 31st August;* ***Time*** *6 for 6.30pm;* ***Price*** *£6 to include a glass of wine*

Alexandra Loske, who gave a most informative talk on *George and his Giraffe* last autumn, returns to give a fascinating account on the short life and tragic early death of Princess Charlotte Augusta of Wales (1796-1817), the only child of George IV and Princess Caroline of Brunswick. Referred to by contemporaries as the 'Daughter of England', Charlotte would have become Queen had she outlived her father and grandfather; and we would not have had a 'Victorian Age'. The public outpouring of grief after her death in childbirth, in 1817, was exceeded only by that which followed the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. In her talk Alexandra will shed light on Regency midwifery practices and manifestations of mourning following Charlotte's death.

Some of Charlotte's happiest times were spent at the Royal Pavilion. Alexandra's talk complements the exhibition of the same name which is currently showing at the Pavilion. It includes paintings, drawings, prints, dresses, memorabilia, archival material and decorative objects. A magnificent vase, depicting Princess Charlotte, never before exhibited, has recently been donated to the Royal Pavilion. It was discovered in an antique shop in Mexico! *Application form attached*

Pre-Raphaelite Avant-garde

William Holman Hunt

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

John Everett Millais

Friends Annual Lecture: *'Pre-Raphaelite Avant-garde'*

Date: *Sat 6th October;* ***Time:*** *3 pm; Members admission free, Non-members £10*

We are delighted to welcome **Dr Carol Jacobi**, Tate Curator of British Art 1850-1915, as our speaker for the 2012 Friends Annual Lecture. Her subject is very topical as it coincides with the major Pre-Raphaelite exhibition at Tate Britain, as well as our fundraising campaign for the West Window. Carol's talk will cast new light on some of the paintings and objects featured in the Tate exhibition.

Dr Carol Jacobi is an expert on the Pre-Raphaelites. Her publications include *'William Holman Hunt, painter, painting, paint'*; and she co-edited *'William Holman Hunt and the Pre-Raphaelite Vision'*, for which she wrote '*Pre-Raphaelite Rebel - Brotherhood 1849-53'* and *'Pre-Raphaelite Passion - Portraits 1858-68'.*

Carol's research subjects focus on 19th and 20th century British art history, and its overlap with other disciplines. She has co-curated exhibitions on William Holman Hunt, and the 20th century artist Isabel Rawsthorne; and has also collaborated with colleagues on books on Brian Clarke, Alberto Giacometti and Francis Bacon.

In 1848, when revolutions occurred in nearly every European country, and society was being redefined amidst tremendous industrial and economic changes, seven British students banded together to generate a revolution in art. They were the Pre Raphaelite Brotherhood - the first to self-consciously style themselves as 'Young British Artists' – and they wrenched British painting away from convention and dependence on European Old Masters. The scholarship of the Pre Raphaelite Brotherhood went far beyond the norms of their day, to embrace religious and scientific texts, medieval and modern poetry. Their passionate, anti-establishment personalities, convictions and relationships matched the daring stories and extreme techniques of their dazzling and sometimes disturbing paintings.

We do hope that you will all bring along at least one friend, who is not yet a Friend of S. Michael's, to this event, as Carol's talk promises to be outstanding. It will be followed by refreshments and is our best opportunity for recruiting further support. *Application form attached*

Continues...

Photo: Royal Pavilion & Museums

David Beevers

A Connoisseurs' Tour of S. Michael's
With David Beevers, MA FSA, Keeper of the Royal Pavilion.
Date: *Saturday 10 November;* ***Time:*** *11.30am*
Price: *Price £5, includes homemade soup, bread and cheese after the tour. Members and their guests only*

David Beevers will take us on a special tour of the Bodley church, during which he will talk about its building history and show us fascinating artefacts including examples of the magnificent Burges plate.

David has a great interest in Victorian art and architecture and has lectured widely on these topics. He has written the authoritative guide to S. Michael's and is a very engaging speaker. *Application form attached*

Photo: Rachel Hunter

John Parry, at Ladies' Lunch

Calling for a little bit of help from our Friends...

All our events require a considerable amount of organisation, both beforehand and on the day. To date, this has been carried out entirely by our Committee and a very small dedicated team of Friends. This is a call for more Friends to volunteer just a small amount of time at an event or two of their choosing, to give us some help on the door or with similar activities. It is all very convivial – and in a very good cause. If you are interested, please contact Ann Smith at: ann@friendsofsaintmichaels.co.uk

Photo: Rex Harris

Ceiling in Bodley Church (det)

Photo: Rex Harris

Archbishop and knight
Clayton & Bell window (det)

Example of altar frontal (det)

Celebrating 150 years of the Bodley Church

'Many thousands... hold it in great esteem... a place where God is worshipped with the highest accessories [that] *poor human ability can bring to his glorification,'* (Brighton Gazette, 1874)

'we have to notice a remarkably good design by Mr. Bodley... The site is very confined, and very awkward,' (The Ecclesiologist, 1859)

S. Michael's is acknowledged as the finest Victorian church in Sussex. A striking, early example of a town church, it was the first brick church in Brighton. Designed by G. F. Bodley in 1858, S. Michael's was built in 1861-2, at a cost of £6,728, and was consecrated by the Bishop of Chichester on 29 September 1862. Constructed to accommodate 700 worshippers, the congregation quickly grew and it was necessary to extend the church dramatically. In 1865, William Burges designed a 'parallel' church, which was built in 1893.

There is much of interest in the Bodley church: its flêche spire houses a bell recovered from Sevastopol during the Crimean War; and the red and gold ceiling was painted in five days by Philip Webb. Complementing the Pre-Raphaelite masterpieces, the Clayton and Bell windows are very fine.

Bodley expressed a desire *'to do one great work and to die looking through a lattice window'.* David Beevers considers that if he built nothing else, S. Michael's would still stand as his *'one great work'.*

In his ENGLAND'S THOUSAND BEST CHURCHES, Simon Jenkins says *'S. Michael's is what historians would call 'important''* but, he adds, *'Rarely can so imposing a building have made itself so invisible.'*

We look forward to welcoming you to our Autumn events – and do spread the word, so that S. Michael's does not remain a *hidden* gem!