



# the flyer

## Father Robert Norbury

Recently arrived at St Michael's, Father Robert sees great potential in the contribution of The Friends to the cultural heritage of the church and the life of the community.

I'm a born and bred Londoner and come from a large family where religion and politics were rigorously discussed, especially on a Sunday lunchtime!

I read Ancient History at Southampton University then trained as an archivist, and subsequently worked in book-selling and publishing before finally responding to the call to ordination, that I received many years previously while on pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham. I have for many years been involved in the fostering of vocations, both lay and ordained and am still engaged in that area for the diocese.

### Previous post

My previous post was at St John the Evangelist, Crowborough. Built in 1839 by the De La Warr family, the church has a magnificent Charles Eamer Kempe reredos which was added to the altar in 1895. Kempe also designed and made most of the stained glass windows. [Editor's note: Kempe was responsible for the restoration and installation of a 16th century [reredos](#) at St Michael's]. There's also an impressive figure of the Virgin Mary, as Queen of Heaven with the Christ Child, designed by Sir Ninian Comper (1864-1960). The figures stand out proud from the wall and they're really beautiful.

### First impressions

I read before I came: 'St Michael's is a Victorian gem in a Regency setting' and that's spot on. Along with the Royal Pavilion and our sister church St Paul's, St Michael's is one of Brighton's noteworthy gems. However, a friend of mine said the other day 'So, where is your church?' He'd walked right past it because he hadn't looked up. It's a bit hidden. St Michael's was designed by two amazing Victorian architects and contains some stunning craftsmanship, though I must admit my dream period is around 1911 - the Edwardi-



Photo: Gabi Tubbs

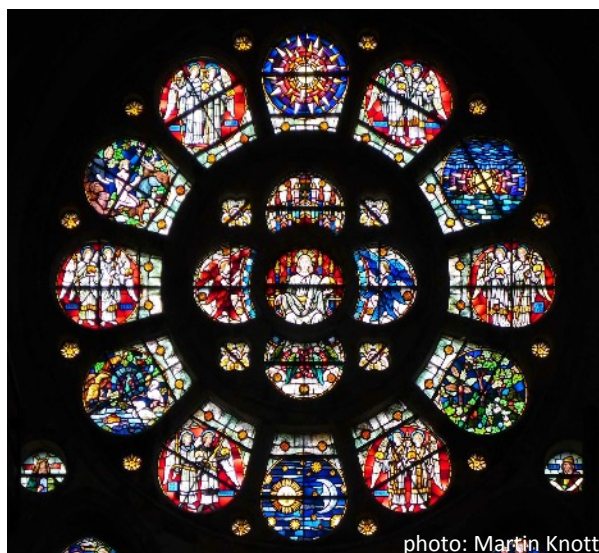
ans had a bit more fun than the Victorians and had loosened up a bit.

St Michael's is a kaleidoscope of talent and I'm still seeing things for the first time. It's a riot, a cultural explosion in one place, but it's also a thing of taste. I particularly love the exquisite little Lady Chapel. The intimacy contrasts with everything else.

### St Michael's in the community

My vision is for St Michael's to be a cultural and community hub and that doesn't just mean the church hall. It's how we look at using the church creatively without compromising what it was originally built for.

The main function of any church has to be worship but in mediaeval times markets and all kinds of activities took place in churches. There has to be a balance. It's not *our* church or *your* church, it's *a* church whether you believe, don't believe or are not sure. Church buildings can be oppressive. There will be some people who just don't get it and it should be there for them, too. I'd like it to be a place for people who through their upbringing haven't encoun-



tered such places. I'd like everyone to feel it belongs to them.

### Working in partnership

I want us to engage with the wider community. The church is a shared place and I'm in a way the steward. It's helpful having a group of people in the Friends who care passionately about the building. As we grow the vision

about how we're going to move forward, the Friends are a partner in that. I hope we can journey and grow together. The Friends are secular but they can walk alongside us, helping us. My wife, Paula is a professional artist and we might, for example put on an exhibition of local artists and the Friends could become involved. We can work in tandem. Some things will fail and some will work but we'll give things a go.

### New projects for The Friends

The most urgent and pressing thing is the Rose Window. If the Friends could look lovingly on that... I'm also keen to see the repair of some of the vestments which are wonderful works of art. And the lighting is in desperate need of attention.

### Further thoughts on working together

I'm a new incumbent so we're starting a new chapter. Are we slightly hiding St Michael's? How do people know about us? The Friends are mostly local – so perhaps they could be promoted further afield? And maybe we could look at doing a joint event so it's not the *Friends* doing it or the *congregation* doing it, but it's *us*. For a healthy future maybe we should start being 'us.' After all, we're in it together to preserve one of the most beautiful buildings in Brighton.

## Jazz and Chips

### John Small

The date may not have been propitious but a full house of Friends and their guests very much enjoyed themselves at a Jazz and Fish and Chips evening in the hall on Friday, 13th November.

The well-chosen traditional jazz was warmly appreciated by the (equally traditional) audience who did not quite sing along to the music (but you could tell that some of them wanted to!) and the excellent fish and chips were served piping hot (as they should be).

**The James Osler Trio** who provided the entertainment consisted of James Osler (son of Friends committee member Jane Osler and her husband Jim) on guitar, George Berrills on double bass and Steve Aston on rhythm guitar.

We all enjoyed what, I understand, has now become a regular Friends' event. Many thanks to everyone who helped prepare for, and clear up after this congenial evening.





# The Annual Lecture

Monica Brewis

Dominic Cole is a lively and engaging speaker who entertained a large audience at the Annual Lecture on 17 October. The title of his lecture: *Theatre of plants and people – gardens as stories* was an absorbing account of Cole's long and distinguished career as a landscape architect and a former Chairman of the Garden History Society.

The photographs, plans and working drawings that Cole showed us during his talk provided a fascinating insight into the working methods of a landscape architect. These included sketches illustrating complex ideas, for example, the Aluna project at Greenwich for a tidal powered moon clock. Some representations emphasised the geological or physical aspects of the site. The Eden Project was illustrated by a bold drawing showing the zig zag cuttings from the old china clay quarry that were to be absorbed into the new design. Historical sites might involve research into the archives. At Lowther Castle in Cumbria an early 18<sup>th</sup> century engraving revealed the Castle gardens were laid out as a series of formal gardens. However, rather than creating an historical reconstruction of the site based on the print, it inspired a design focusing on the structural qualities of the formal garden.

Cole has enjoyed a full and varied career working with a wide number of private and public clients. These include the Southbank Roof Garden for the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Magdalen College in Oxford, Camden's Public Housing Department, and the Horniman Museum in London. At the Horniman Cole was able to make reference to the anthropological collections within the museum by choosing plants that were used in manufacturing dyes, or were used for making musical instru-

ments. Furthermore local immigrant communities have been encouraged to recall their experiences and stories by growing food plants remembered from childhood.

Cole has worked on projects where the clients have conflicting interests. An example of one of many sensitive commissions is the HS2 project and the Vale of Aylesbury. This involves working with the National Trust, local amenity groups, local councils and HS2 officials, to provide a solution to minimise the visual and environmental impact of the railway upon the local landscape and the National Trust's Waddesdon Manor estate.

Cole provided an absorbing account of the challenges and rewards of his profession. The lecture was followed by questions from a packed audience and the afternoon concluded with a splendid tea with a wonderful array of homemade cakes that included chocolate cakes (various), fruit cakes and Victoria sponges.



photos: Gabi Tubbs

# Getting creative

## Christmas Wreath Workshop

Gabi Tubbs

Two weeks before Christmas when the rush to get everything ready in time for the festivities can make tempers fray, a workshop teaching you how to create a beautiful Christmas wreath can be a welcome diversion.



photo: Luci Hefferman

St. Michael's creative guru, Simon Thompson happened to attend a small Christmas floral workshop that prompted him to hold similar workshops for The Friends. Not only was this a perfect opportunity to encourage a community get-together but also to boost Friends' funds. No sooner had the publicity gone out, did the courses get booked up by Friends, parishioners and residents. With the help of Jean and yours truly the hall soon took on a Christmassy feel with florist buckets containing foliage, greenery, berry branches and bags of soft green moss purchased at Hollingbury flower market; fresh pine cones, holly and rosemary and bay came from Jean's country garden. Boxes containing lush branches of Nordmann fir and dried limes and oranges filled the air of the hall with an evocative scent of Yule. On arrival Luci (who helps to run St. Michael's Sunday school) welcomed everyone with a cup



Photo: Gabi Tubbs

of fresh coffee accompanied by mince pies, sing along Christmas music in the background added to the festive atmosphere. Before long everyone was allocated their own table with the basic equipment to make a wreath – a mood board with tear sheets showing a plethora of lovely Christmas wreaths was at hand to inspire colour combinations and a variety of designs, so were several gorgeous wreaths made earlier. Gloves and aprons on, students listened and watched Simon, Gabi and Jean on how to get started. Before long, circular wire frames were covered in fresh moss ready for the next step. Encouraging step-by-step instructions, helpful advice, followed by moments of deep concentration and light-hearted banter were conducive to creating a relaxed atmosphere. Before long the most gorgeous wreaths started to emerge followed by contented smiles. To celebrate our creative endeavours, Simon opened a bottle of Prosecco to celebrate our successful afternoon's work. Everyone went home happily with their creation, the workshop team continued to make a few more wreaths to order, before it was time to clear up.

The workshops cost £35 per person including all materials and refreshments.

## FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 6 <sup>th</sup> March 11.30	Stained Glass in St Michael's David Beevers	Saturday 27 <sup>th</sup> August	Concert by 'Unfenced'
Friday 17 <sup>th</sup> June	The Annual Dinner	September	Ladies' lunch
Saturday 18 <sup>th</sup> June pm	Conversazione	October	The Annual Lecture
Friday 8 <sup>th</sup> July	John Cox	November	Frank Gray

web site

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