



the flyer

Friends to help fund display of vestments

The Parochial Church Council is preparing plans for the regular display of vestments from the very fine collection held at St Michael's. The Friends have agreed to provide matching funding to a maximum of £10,000.



Photo: John McKean

Vestments on display at the Annual Lecture with a fine Bodley designed frontal on the altar.

The intention is to mount a rotating display of individual vestments in the north aisle. A supporting set of photographs of the full collection will be mounted with an accompanying guide to its cultural and artistic significance.

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G F Bodley and his family in Brighton

Michael Hall

Many visitors admiring the stained glass by William Morris's company in St Michael and All Angels will have noticed that the window by the font, depicting the Baptism of Christ, is dedicated to the memory of 'W.H. Bodley M.D.' Dr Bodley, who died in Brighton in 1855, seven years before the church was opened, was the father of the original designer of St Michael, G.F. Bodley. This article will explore the architect's family background – a story that may suggest that this window contains a private meaning.

William Hulme Bodley was born in 1780. His father, George Bodley, was a partner in a prosperous business based in the City of London, Bodley & Etty, which made trimmings in precious metals, including braid for military uniforms. It continued until the 1840s and money from Bodley & Etty helped to cushion G.F. Bodley's career. W.H. Bodley did not go into the business, but went to Cambridge, the beginning of a family association with the university that was to bring his son several important architectural commissions. He then trained as physician in Edinburgh. It seems likely that he had established a medical career in Brighton before his earliest documented link with the town, his marriage in 1812 to Mary Anne Hamilton, whose father, Frederick, was the minister of the Congregational Chapel in Union Street.

This was a marriage across a major denominational division, but it may have seemed less consequential than it does in retrospect, since W.H. Bodley's father, who came from Crediton in Devon, had been raised as a Presbyterian before converting to Anglicanism. The architect's obituarists refer to his maternal grandfather simply as 'the Revd. Frederick Hamilton', perhaps inviting the reader to assume that he was an Anglican. Whatever the case, the Hamiltons, unlike the Bodleys, played no part in G.F. Bodley's career: the religious difference was too great.

On his death in 1819, Frederick Hamilton was buried in his chapel; if there was a memorial to him it did not survive the reconstruction of the building in 1825. His chief memorial was the chapel's school in Middle Street, Brighton's first school explicitly for the poor, which he had helped to found. In her 1954 history of the Union Chapel, A. Elizabeth Carson states that a portrait of Frederick was then hanging in the school.

William and Mary Anne Bodley had nine children, three boys and six girls: it was thought notable that all survived infancy (indeed, all lived into old age) – presumably, having a doctor as father was a considerable advantage. In 1817, after the birth of his third child, W.H. Bodley accepted a job at the Royal Hull Infirmary, of which he was appointed Physician in 1825. Their

youngest son, George Frederick Bodley, was born in Hull on 14 March 1827, in a house in Albion Street that does not survive. In 1838, a year after his wife gave birth to her last child (she was then forty-seven), W. H. Bodley retired because of ill health, and the family returned to Brighton.

Despite G.F. Bodley's association with the Anglo-Catholic tradition embodied by St Michael, neither Mary Anne Bodley nor her husband were enthusiasts for high-church Anglicanism. They attended Christ Church, Montpelier Road, opened in 1837. Its vicar, James Vaughan, was clearly a family friend, as he was to receive a legacy from Mrs Bodley; he was an evangelical, and refused to use eucharistic vestments long after they had been adopted in other Brighton parishes.



The Baptism of Christ, designed by Edward Burne-Jones, made by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., and installed in St Michael's in 1862

In about 1845 the Bodleys moved to Merton House, a barge-boarded Tudoresque villa that formed part of a new development, Furze Hill, designed by the architect Decimus Burton. The house was just over the town boundary in Hove, and from then on the family worshipped at the parish church, St Andrew.



Bodley family home: Merton House, Furze Hill, Hove designed by Decimus Burton, the house does not survive. *Regency Society James Gray Collection*



photo: Alison Minns

The graves of Bodley's parents and brother, Thomas in St Andrew's churchyard Hove.

The family burial plot, where G.F. Bodley's parents and brother, Thomas (who had been a teacher) are interred, is in the north-west corner of its original churchyard.

This evidence points to a family tradition of evangelical churchmanship, a suggestion reinforced by W.H. Bodley's treatment of his eldest son, William (1820–1900). He was a clergyman, who in 1851 went over to Rome. Conversions reached a new high in 1850–1 as a result of the

Gorham Judgement, a decision by the Privy Council that appeared to permit a non-sacramental understanding of baptism. William decided to enter the priesthood, at a time when anti-Catholic prejudice in England was the most vociferous that it had been for over a generation, thanks to Pius IX's controversial reinstatement in 1850 of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England, the so-called 'Papal Aggression'. The reaction of William's parents may be judged from his father's will: in a codicil he was disinherited. After his ordination, William taught at St Mary's College, Oscott, and in 1871 he became chaplain to the Bedingfeld family at Oxburgh, Norfolk, where he remained until his death. So far as can be told, his change of religious allegiance did not harm his relations with the rest of his family, and he probably had a significant influence on G.F. Bodley's high churchmanship.

Educated at Dr Morris's school at 33 Brunswick Square, G.F. Bodley did not go to university. His choice of career was determined by the marriage in 1846 of his sister Georgina to a Brighton doctor, Samuel King Scott. This was the result of a Yorkshire connection: Scott was a cousin of John Scott, vicar of St Mary, Lowgate, Hull, who was a friend of the Bodleys. At the wedding, at St Andrew, Hove, on 14 May, the Bodleys were introduced to one of Samuel's older brothers, the successful young architect George Gilbert Scott. Bodley was enthusiastic about Gothic architecture but, as he recalled, 'I had not drawn at all before. The only sketch I remember making was one of the sea at Brighton when the moon made a broad path of light that led to mystery and darkness. I remember showing it to Scott, who said it was not architecture – which it certainly was not.' Bodley asked his father to arrange a pupillage for him in Scott's office in London.

After he set up in practice by himself in 1852, Bodley worked from Brighton, where he remained until about 1861, when he moved to London, accompanied by his mother, who kept house for him; she returned permanently to Brighton after Bodley's marriage in 1873 and died there in 1883, at the age of 92. St Michael was Bodley's most important work in Brighton, but before his move to London he received several other commissions there, almost all of which have vanished; these will be the subject of a subsequent article.

Bodley told his pupils that his mother had a determining influence on his life, particularly in her interest in art and architecture, but he never, so far as we know, mentioned his father to them. If, as seems likely, William Bodley's conversion to Roman Catholicism was prompted by disputes in the Church of England about the nature of baptism, was there something pointed in Bodley's decision to dedicate to their father's memory a window depicting the Baptism of Christ. Might it be a gesture of reproach – or of reconciliation?

Michael Hall is the author of *George Frederick Bodley and the Later Gothic Revival in Britain and America*, published by Yale University Press in 2014.

A concept (and a taste) of Heaven

Michael Fisher at the Annual Lecture

Around a hundred old and new Friends of St Michael's and other guests attended the annual lecture with warm autumnal sunshine filtering through the newly restored west window. The church interior glowed and St Michael's could be seen as a true '... epicentre of Revolutionary Anglican Medievalism', which was the title of Dr Lepine's lecture.

Starting with the famous prolonged legal action (c1869) between Rev'd John Purchas, perpetual curate of St James's Chapel, Brighton (now demolished) v Colonel Charles Elphinstone we heard how Purchas together with a group of transgressive 'undutiful' priests railed (in part) against the 39 articles of the faith by introducing revolutionary sacramental ritualism and doctrines through observing the Catholic rather than the Protestant heritage of the Anglican Church. Not only were the physical interiors of churches altered but also altar candles, incense, processions, holy water, new church plate, symbolic decoration and 'dressing up' in copes, hoods, chasubles, albs, birettas and other 'Roman style' vestments formed a crucial part of the ritualism.

Dr Lepine then explained how the cultural engagement of the medieval past and the Victorian present emerged rapidly to inspire and trigger Victorian imagination through the new 'Gothic Revival' style of architecture and design. For some it was 'awesome Gothic totality' – learning from the medieval past and reworking it in the tiniest detail to form a complete entity. It was not just seen in church architecture but extended elements of itself into municipal and domestic architecture and design. Whether or not this wider aspect symbolised 'a foretaste of heaven' is open to debate!

While delivering the lecture, Dr Lepine made use of St Michael's interior to emphasise the legacy of Bodley's original church (now the south chapel and aisle) and Burges's large extension (the nave and north aisle) by directing us to particular features and a display of vestments and church plate. It led some way to identifying how immersed and skilled the designers and artists were in interpreting medieval design and symbolism by rethinking and remaking; taking and doing something new. Without delving too deeply into the emerging divergent theology of the time, we were guided through the elements of medieval mystery and fantasy and the sacramental way of life. These, together with the 'concept of heaven', formed the creative vision for divine



photo: John McKean

A taste of heaven
Friends and guests
enjoy the traditional
array of cakes

From this, we were enthusiastically introduced to the earlier origins of The Oxford Movement c1833. The influence this had on the great 'thinking' architect/designer figures of the 19th century – Augustus Pugin, William Morris, William Burges, George Frederick Bodley, William Butterfield, Ninian Comper, (to name a few) was profound. Fundamental to each was a new design vocabulary that focused on English and European Medieval influences. By using clear well-selected illustrations, Dr Lepine was able to show us the roots of inspiration and aspiration – 'a vision of heaven on earth' (Bodley). Their ecclesiastical projects attracted patrons, money, and the best of materials, which promoted heightened skills in many crafts.

sacred spaces, church plate, vestments, furnishings, ecclesiastical art and artefacts, which informed the aesthetics of Anglo-Catholicism in the 19th century.

Not surprisingly, Dr Lepine received well-deserved prolonged applause after concluding her lively captivating lecture.

Praise must also be given to all who helped to organise this event; not least the bakers who produced an array of cakes worthy of a 'taste of heaven'!

Jeanne Openshaw on the Indian Evening

On November 17th, the Friends of St Michael's held another Indian Feast to lighten our lives in dark days. After an initial drink, John Baily and Veronica Doubleday, renowned ethnomusicologists of South Asia, treated us to a concert of Indian music in the Bodley church, a wonderfully atmospheric setting for fine music such as this.



photo: Gabbi Tubbs

Renowned ethnomusicologists Veronica Doubleday and John Baily

Veronica began with paeans to Hindu goddesses, accompanying her lovely voice with the harmonium - a Western keyboard instrument widely used in the sub-continent. The first of these songs was to Sarasvati, goddess of wisdom and music, in the melodic mode (raga) called Bhairavi. The second was dedicated to Parvati, consort of the transcendent lord Shiva, in the raga Malkauns. These hauntingly beautiful pieces were followed by a song composed by Brightonian Mohini Mathur, from whom Veronica had learned classical Hindustani singing. The words are by Mira Bai, a 16th century female mystic poet and devotee of the lord Krishna, whom she addresses in this song as her guru. All this seemed highly appropriate in an Anglo-Catholic church with a large statue of the Virgin Mary watching over proceedings.

John continued the performance on the rubab, a venerable lute-like instrument, originating in Afghanistan. The rubab is the ancestor of the better-known sarod of classical Indian music, although, unlike the sarod, the rubab is fretted. Classical pieces in two modes, Bhupali and Purva Kalyan, mesmerised the audience. John was accompanied by Veronica on the dairah drum.

Chaula's of Little East Street provided delicious authentic Indian food catering to both vegetarian and non-vegetarian tastes elegantly presented and served by Friends. **Thanks are due to all those who helped set up this evening.**

Alison Minns relives an afternoon tangled up in ivy

The Christmas wreath that I made at one of the three wreath making sessions at St Michael's in early December is a reminder of a convivial, and relatively (!) artistically productive afternoon. We were greeted with coffee and mince pies. We made our wire hooks (and lost them again amongst our greenery). We packed our earthy moss and sprayed it (and the parquet and tables). We wound our wire in awkward loops. We stuck in our chosen greenery at odd angles. We lost our secateurs. We found someone else's. Prickly eryngium spiked our nether regions as we bent over to select choice sprays. Prosecco appeared. More prosecco appeared. We laughed. We admired one another's artistic efforts. We

were each, I think silently delighted that by the end of the enjoyable afternoon we had at least made a start on those dreaded Christmas preparations.

Every wreath made by the people in the group was very individual. Each had a little of the personality of its maker. I was delighted with mine, as I was with my efforts previous years, especially as I am usually rubbish at anything artistic. I love using ribbons but there were cones and spiced and silvered things to adorn your creation...

Special thanks to Simon Thompson for organising the three sessions and providing all the materials. The sessions are a great way to raise money for the Friends. See you all at a session next December!



Just a few of the thirty wreaths made by Friends at Simon's three workshops this year