



the flyer

St Michael's historic vestments - repair restoration and display

Among the hidden treasures of St Michael's are the wonderful textile items such as vestments, copes and altar frontals; some items are of national importance. Some textiles include elements which might date back to Elizabethan times and others were designed by important artists/architects such as Ninian Comper, Bodley himself and other members of the pre Raphaelite Brotherhood.



Photo: Thompson

The white High Mass set has been identified as the top priority for professional restoration leading to both display and use. There are some beautiful copes with myriad illustrations of biblical stories and angels – the mark of St Michael's!!

In addition it is intended to purchase two custom made display cabinets to exhibit some of the wonderful examples of embroidery.

Total cost for all restoration of the textiles held at the church, both by professionals and by supervised volunteers, is estimated at over £60,000; just the white set alone will cost just over £10,000 to repair and restore.

The recent hugely popular Victoria and Albert exhibition *Opus Anglicanum* included some beautiful vestments and textiles much like those constituting our own hidden treasures.

Advisers from Watts & Co and a specialist restorer are ready to start so the Friends committee has committed to contribute £10,000 towards repair, restoration and display cabinets.



**FRIENDS OF
ST MICHAEL'S**
PATRON: SIR ROY STRONG

The Chairman of The Friends, Chris Dawes OBE
requests the pleasure of your company
at

The Annual Dinner
Friday 22nd June

Doors 7.15 for dinner 8.00pm

RSVP

The Parish Office

Victoria Rd Brighton BN1 3FU

01273 822284

Not just St Michael

G F Bodley's other work in Brighton

Michael Hall

As was discussed in an article in the December 2017 issue of *The Flyer*, George Frederick Bodley (1827-1907) was brought up in Brighton. Following his training in George Gilbert Scott's office in 1846-52, he practised from his parents' home in Hove for a decade. Bodley's local connections led to a number of commissions, of which by far the most significant was St Michael and All Angels, opened in 1862, the year Bodley moved permanently to London. Very little survives of his other work in Brighton, which has fallen victim to changing tastes and urban redevelopment, yet all of it was of interest and deserves to be remembered.

Most of Bodley's Brighton commissions centred on St Paul's. Opened in 1848, the church was an initiative of the vicar of Brighton, H.M. Wagner, who in 1850 appointed his son, Arthur Douglas Wagner, as incumbent; Arthur was then twenty six, just three years older than Bodley. St Paul quickly became known for its use of ceremonial and music; eucharistic vestments were worn from the start. This attracted Bodley, who occasionally played the organ for services. Soon after he had settled in Hove, he was asked by A.D. Wagner to design an elementary school for the parish on an enclosed site tucked behind the west end of the church.

It survived until 1971, but probably because it was tightly hemmed in by buildings there are very few photographs of it. They give only a faint impression of the banded brickwork that brought colour to its exterior. Inside, there was a dado of coloured tiles and a chimneypiece carved with a bas-relief of Christ blessing children. 'We are always glad to see school rooms treated in this way with some attention to art and beauty', commented *The Ecclesiologist* magazine in its review of the design in 1854; sadly, no photographs of the interior are known and the sculptor of the chimneypiece is not recorded.

The success of this commission may have helped persuade Wagner's father to ask Bodley to design an entire church, at West Blatchington, to replace the ruinous medieval St Peter. Drawings for the new build-

ing, described by H.M. Wagner 'as simplicity itself and therefore suitable for the parishioners of West Blatchington', were ready by October 1855, but it proved impossible to acquire the proposed site. Bodley was paid ten guineas for his drawings (which do not survive); he insisted that the payment was 'on account' in the hope that the design might one day be built, but it was eventually decided instead to commission J.T. Mickelthwaite and Somers Clarke to reconstruct the old church, which was reopened in 1891.



St Paul's elementary school. Designed in 1854, it was G.F Bodley's first building in Brighton. (Photo: The James Gray Collection, Brighton Regency Society)

Once St Paul's school was completed, A.D. Wagner asked Bodley to design additions and furnishings for the church. Since St Paul's is precisely orientated, the east end, rather inconveniently, is on West Street. To avoid the congregation entering the church from the east, its architect, R.C. Carpenter, provided a narrow covered passage along the south side of the church, leading to a door in the middle of the south aisle. Bodley designed a more dignified approach by extending the passage to the west end, where the narthex was added in the 1870s. He replaced the door in the south aisle with a window made by Nathaniel Lavers in about 1855. It was designed by Alfred Bell, later to be a founder of Clayton and Bell, who had been a fellow pupil of Bodley in Scott's office.

Bodley's most famous addition to St Paul's has gone, having been removed by the parish in 1975 and subsequently sold. This was the altarpiece of the *Adoration*

of the *Magi and Annunciation*, one of Edward Burne-Jones's earliest works, which was installed in 1861. Its rich harmonies provided the colouristic key for Bodley's decoration of the chancel, a project that included toning down with paint the transparent brightness of the church's original stained glass, designed by A.W.N. Pugin and made by Hardman. Bodley's decorative scheme has been removed but his addition of a roodloft to R.C. Carpenter's chancel screen remains – the figures were added by Bodley's former pupil H.C. Ingram in 1911.



The chancel of St Paul's, Brighton, as decorated and furnished by Bodley in the 1860s, with the altarpiece by Edward Burne-Jones that is now in Andrew Lloyd Webber's collection. (Photo: The James Gray Collection, Brighton Regency Society)

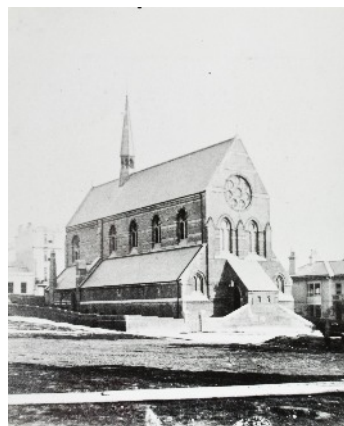
Between 1824 and 1864, sixteen new Anglican churches were opened in Brighton, of which nine were directly founded or funded by the Wagners. Since there was no subdivision of the parish until 1873 these buildings were chapels of ease or mission churches. The first



Bodley's other Brighton church: St Mary and St Mary Magdalene, Bread Street, in an anonymous late 19th-century painting. (Brighton Museum & Art Gallery)

such chapel for St Paul's was St Mary and St Mary Magdalene in Bread Street, opened in 1862. Having closed in 1948, this modest little building was demolished in 1965, but an anonymous painting of around 1900 records its colourful and densely furnished interior. Its atmosphere probably resembled that of another of St Paul's mission churches, the Annunciation in Washington Street, opened in 1864. Although the Annunciation was designed by a local architect, William Dancy, it is possible that Bodley influenced the choice of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. to provide its east window, installed in 1866.

By then, Bodley had left Brighton, and it is probably significant that Wagner gave him no further commissions. He preferred to use local architects, perhaps because he could control them more closely. One Brighton commission that Bodley must have hoped for after he had left for London was the extension of St Michael, for which the incumbent, Charles Beanlands, was soliciting funds by 1866. For reasons that I discussed in an article in the October 2016 issue of *The Flyer*, Beanlands went to William Burges instead. To the list of Bodley's lost Brighton works should be added the north aisle of St Michael, demolished when the extension was built in the 1890s. The aisle's exterior was recorded in only a couple of surviving photographs before the view from the north-west was closed by later buildings.



St Michael and All Angels shortly after completion, in a rare view from the north-west. (Photo: The James Gray Collection, Brighton Regency Society)

There is one question about the north aisle that has, so far as I know, never been asked. What were Bodley's and Beanlands' intentions for its glazing? The fact that Morris's firm was asked to supply windows only for the south aisle may suggest that Beanlands had decided from the outset that the north aisle was likely to be temporary. In that case Bodley would have known when he designed St Michael that there was an intention that it would be enlarged, which would surely have made it all the more painful to him that he was not entrusted with the task.

Delia Fearey reports on Alexandra on Alexander

It was a warm, sunny spring evening. Ninety people gathered. We sipped wine, greeted friends and looked forward to the talk 'Alexander McQueen: Art, Fashion and Darkness.'

Our speaker, Dr Alexandra Loske, an art historian, known to many of the assembled was introduced by Jonathan Prichard, who admitted he knew nothing about fashion but a cousin had been Miss British Ny-lons in 1964.



photo: Tubbs

We learned his remarkable story: leaving school with one 'O' level in art, becoming an apprentice in Savile Row, working with theatrical costumiers and designers. His MA collection at Central St Martin's in 1992 was purchased by Isabella Blow, fashionista, writer (*Tatler*) and muse. The collection was contemporary yet romantic exuding power and raw energy, evidencing skills of razor sharp tailoring.

The star was born. He launched his own label and four years later became head designer at Givenchy in 1996.

Influenced by nature, bird watching, his Scottish background, paintings, sculpture, books and photography, he would turn ideas into performance art. He produced fascinating, complex and challenging collections and shows.

Still and moving images of his designs, photo shoots and catwalk shows illustrated the talk. We watched a pepper ghost hologram performance of Kate Moss.

We learned that human hair was sewn into pieces of his MA collection 'Jack the Ripper Stalks his Victims'. We talked of 'Highland Rape' 1995, 'bumster' trousers, pouring on of 'rubber corsets', dresses made from oyster shells, pheasant feathers, lace on antlers, 'claw' shoes - all seemed unusual topics for church.

His final partly-completed collection, 'Angels and Demons', was shown in total silence after his death in 2010. But the brand lives on.

Full house for
Alexandra on
Alexander



photo: Fearey

Who would have thought the *enfant terrible* would have produced a label worn by the future Queen of England at her wedding, be honoured as a CBE or in his short career become International Designer of the Year and four times British Designer of the Year.

Alexandra clearly appreciates his work and gave us a very entertaining, informative and lively talk. She was presented with a floral bouquet influenced by McQueen.

The audience? Split. Some were devotees and remained so, others not convinced at all. Some found him strange and extreme.

Never mind. We carried on the evening with a delicious cheese selection and, yes, some more wine and plenty of chatting.



photo: Fearey

Thank you Alexandra and to those who arranged and hosted this enjoyable convivial evening.

Ann Smith tells how she made some very good Friends

'In dire need', it said in the visitors' book. Father Robert Fayers spotted it and wasn't best pleased. This was May 2009. The 'dire need' was for the paper murals in the west tympanum and over the altar in the Bodley church, both areas with the paper falling off the wall. In those days I did church watch - 2 hours most Saturday afternoons - to keep the building open for visitors and the inflammatory comment had been written on my watch by John Cox, opera director, art lover, neighbour and friend. The two of us were caught and asked to join a small group gathered together by the priest to relaunch the Friends of St Michael's. That small group is still very much an influential part of the current committee.

There had always been an annual lecture and the October after these early meetings saw John Cox introducing the speaker and the church filled with publicity for the Friends, whose membership then was about 70, and is now around 240.

A party was planned for Twelfth Night. It snowed and snowed but still an intrepid few turned up and when we really relaunched the Friends some time later, the church seemed packed: music, free drink and canapés, and masses of enthusiasm. People wanted to be involved, wanted to give of their talents and we were off with our first annual dinner which was a huge success, all cooked in-house or rather in local houses.

There was a rhythm that developed to our varied events: some serious, some less so but all with the intention of raising much needed funds and giving Friends an enjoyable time and a chance to get together.

Even the committee meetings were fun, once a quarter, early evening, not too long - time to go out for a meal afterwards - and with a sense of achievement.

I think it has worked. We have an enthusiastic and loyal group of Friends, whose subs provide a much needed regular income for conservation.



Ann at Simon's wreath making workshop: Christmas 2016

I was into my retirement when I got going, keen to do almost anything, enjoying the stimulus and friendship of the others and revelling in the opportunity to meet people who gave of their time and expertise to help the cause: people from the world of art and literature, purveyors of Spanish food, fashion designers, flamenco dancers, Bollywood dancers, Afghan musicians, jazz groups... and I've even learnt to make a wreath and bake a roulade.

Is there anyone out there or anyone you know who might like to be actively involved?



photo: Tubbs

Icicles Party



photo: Bailey



photo: Tubbs