



# the flyer

## Future events for your diary

### Wreath making workshop

All materials, mince pies, coffee, prosecco

6th & 8th December 2-4 pm

Contact Simon 01273 822284

### Icicles Party £5

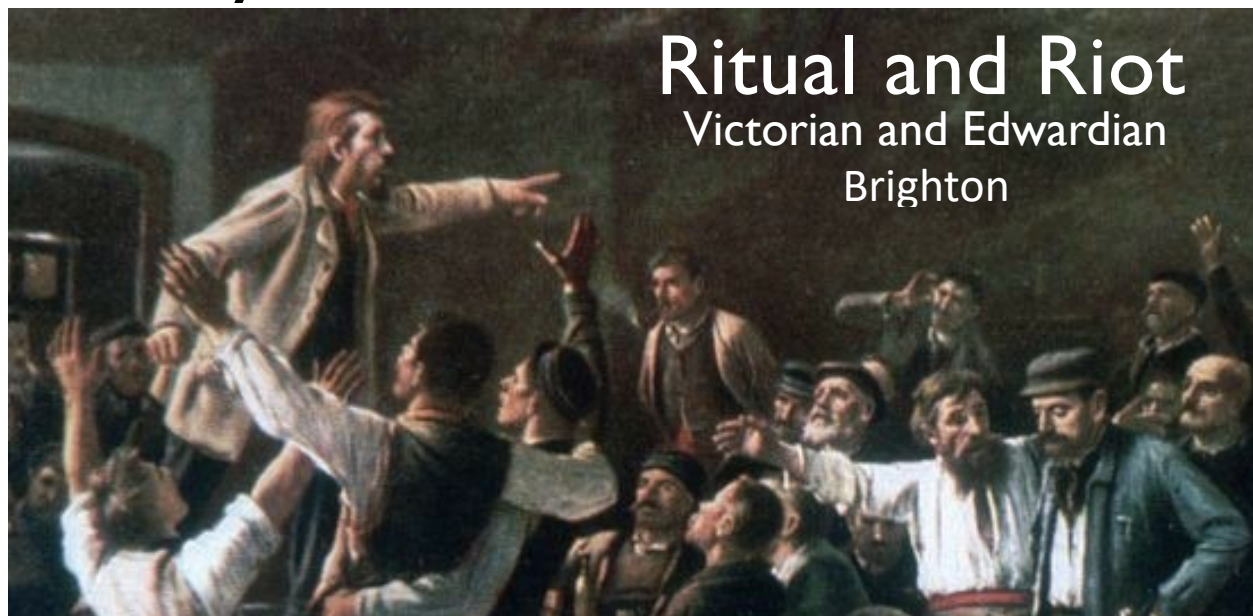
Nibbles and mulled wine in the Bodley church

1st February 6.30 pm

Members and their guests

### Sue Berry £8

29th March 6.30 pm



### Ritual and Riot

Victorian and Edwardian  
Brighton

### A Literary Event With Anna Pasternak

April - details later

### The Annual Dinner

21st June

# Alexia Lazou finds herself in heaven

**Edward Burne-Jones: Pre-Raphaelite Visionary, Tate Britain, Millbank, London. 24 October 2018 – 24 February 2019**

I was first introduced to Edward Burne-Jones through my interest in Aubrey Beardsley. His role in Beardsley's story seemed to me as a kindly father-figure offering advice and encouragement to the young artist who at the time was going through his 'Arthurian' phase. Once Beardsley grew tired of drawing knights and foliage and moved into more 'grotesque' subject matter, Burne-Jones turned his back and no longer considered Beardsley a worthy protégé.



*Phyllis and  
Demophoön*  
1870

Birmingham  
Museums  
Trust

I continued to think of Burne-Jones as this highly moral, rather stuffy prude until I learnt more about him, particularly from Fiona MacCarthy's

biography *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination*.

There were many sides to Burne-Jones and this new exhibition seeks to show them in colourful glory. It is the first major retrospective to be held in London for over forty years, and brings together a wonderful array in all kinds of media.

There are seven rooms, each dedicated to a different aspect of Burne-Jones's work and my first recommendation is to allow plenty of time for your visit. I was in there for two and a half hours! My second is to take a powerful magnifying glass. The most marvellous thing for me at this, and indeed any exhibition, is the opportunity to see the artworks close up.

The exhibition begins with some of Burne-Jones's pen and ink drawings, exquisitely detailed and described by Rossetti as 'unequalled by anything except perhaps Albert Dürer's finest work'. In the same room there are a couple of his very first designs in stained glass, with backgrounds as intricately detailed as his drawings, and there are further examples of stained glass displayed later. None of them showed any particular pictorial similarity to those at St. Michael's, although a preparatory drawing of the Virgin for G.F. Bodley's Church of St. Martin's, Scarborough did resemble the posture of the Virgin in the *Flight into Egypt* window, reversed in direction.

Burne-Jones's sense of humour is not generally obvious from his public works, and a selection of letters and caricatures bring this aspect out. I particularly love the way he presents himself and friend William Morris as a kind of Victorian Laurel and Hardy. Another sketch, *Four Figures in Long Robes*, reminded me of Edvard Munch figures, but the facial expression was less *The Scream*, more *The Ooh!*



The work possibly of most interest to readers of *The Flyer* must be *The Annunciation and the Adoration of the Magi* 1861, a triptych painted for the altarpiece from St. Paul's Church in Brighton. The central scene features portraits of Jane and William Morris as Mary and one of the kings, the poet Swinburne as a shepherd, and even Burne-Jones himself puts in an appearance. In *The Annunciation*, two parts which flank the main panel, he gives the Virgin a likeness of Georgiana, his wife.

There may be some confusion over this triptych. While the label tells us that 'on the recommenda-

tal male nude, although by the second version Demophoön had conveniently found a handy chiffon scarf to protect his modesty. There is also reference to Burne-Jones's fascination with the grotesque – perhaps he and Beardsley had more in common after all?

The highlight must be the reassembling of the two narrative sets of pictures recounting the stories of *Perseus* and *The Briar Rose* (Sleeping Beauty) respectively. The latter ensemble was exhibited to the public at both Agnew's gallery and the East End's Toynbee Hall to satisfy Burne-Jones's belief in art for all, before being whisked away to a private residence, Buscott Park.



*The Annunciation and the Adoration of the Magi* 1861 Tate

tion of architect G F Bodley, Burne-Jones painted an altarpiece for St Paul's church in Brighton', it doesn't say that this is the first version of the altarpiece. After it had been installed, Burne-Jones felt the central panel was too complicated and painted a simplified version for the church. The one featured in this exhibition was presented to the Tate in 1934 by G.H. Bodley in memory of George Frederick Bodley. The second version remained in St. Paul's until the 1970s when it was removed and subsequently displayed in Brighton Museum & Art Gallery. It was later sold and is now in the Andrew Lloyd Webber collection (as referred to by Michael Hall in the June issue of *The Flyer*). Nonetheless, the early version is a remarkable piece of work to behold – the curtain behind Gabriel reminding me of embossed leather.

A large part of the exhibition consists of the major paintings and I found it ironic to think that Burne-Jones's first depiction of *Phyllis and Demophoön* 1870 was criticized for including a full fron-

I have only seen the picture *The Rose Bower* as a small reproduction and was delighted to discover a patterned border on the princess's bedspread featured tiny figures releasing birds into the air, and that the geometric designs on the stair carpet are in fact stylised peacocks.

There is a variety of textile works on show, and I was intrigued to learn that two tapestries depicting the story of The Holy Grail are owned by guitarist Jimmy Page, co-writer of the song *Stairway to Heaven*, a title that could quite easily suit a Burne-Jones piece.

The exhibition concludes with Burne-Jones's vision of 'heaven beginning six inches over the top of our heads, as it really does'. I would say that heaven begins about sixty miles over the top of our heads, at least until next February.

# How Brighton helped change the church

**William Whyte** *Professor of social and architectural history at St John's College, Oxford*

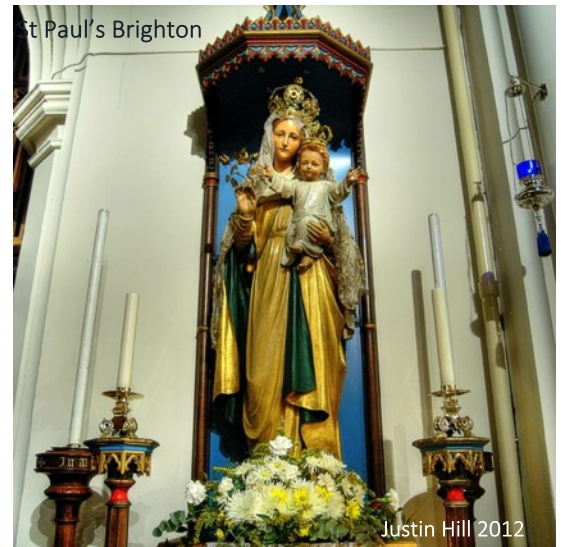
Buried deep in the bowels of the Bodleian Library, the collected texts of the Brighton Protestant Defence Committee are every bit as much fun as they sound. Filled with outrage at 'ritualism', 'popery', incense, vestments, and the like, they are neither a light read nor a bundle of laughs. But they help illustrate just how controversial the church could be in the nineteenth century. More interestingly still, they are evidence for a profound change – a real revolution – in church architecture: a revolution in which Brighton played a surprisingly important part.

Typical of the sorts of things that protestant polemicists produced is a slim pamphlet of 1859: *The natural history of Puseyism, with a short account of the Sunday opera at St. Paul's, Brighton*. Pseudonymously published by 'Adam Bede', its real author was the radical temperance reformer and early advocate of vegetarianism, William Horsell. He was Catholic in nothing but his dislikes – and he disliked pretty much everything about the religion he encountered in Brighton. Here he found people seeking to make 'religion as much a mere pageant – a mere show – as they possibly could.' Here he found clergymen with 'smooth chins' who 'seduced' raw youths into 'all the mysteries' of Anglo-Catholicism.

Horsell and the Brighton Protestant Defence Committee were engaged in a very local dispute, of course. They were just a few of the voices seeking to combat the influence of the Wagner family on Brighton. It's well known that the nineteenth century saw the vicar Henry Michell Wagner and his son, the curate of St Paul's, Arthur Douglas Wagner, engage in an all-consuming process of church reform. As a result, they fought radicals and low-churchmen, quarrelled with supporters and outraged the press. They built half a dozen churches and supported still more. The younger Wagner also established Anglican sisterhoods and erected housing for the poor. Horsell was clear that that 'old woman' Arthur Douglas Wagner was especially to blame for the corruption of religion that he found in Brighton.

Yet the reason that these texts found their way to Oxford was because they were believed to have a more than merely local importance. The battles fought out in Brighton did not just concern the Wagners and their many opponents. They were seen as part of a broader fight for the soul of the Church of England. The Protestant Defence Committee and their allies feared that the Reformation itself was under threat. They worried about the new and ornate churches being built in Brighton and beyond. They worried that ritualism was drawing England back into the Roman fold.

In all sorts of ways, this reflected a misunderstanding. The Wagners and their allies were by no means crypto-Catholics. Henry Michell Wagner was a high-churchman of the old school: a Church and King Tory and profoundly anti-Catholic. His son Arthur was, it's true, an advanced Tractarian and ritualist. But, like the overwhelming majority of both Tractarians and ritualists, his home was always within the Church of England. Legal cases, public protests, his outrage at the decisions made by the



Church and by the law: none of this drove him out of Anglicanism.

Moreover, in truth, even the ritualism found at St Paul's was not as alarming as all that. Questioned by the Royal Commission on Ritual in the late 1860s, A. D. Wagner observed that, when it first opened, St Paul's did not have a surpliced choir or daily services and only had a fortnightly communion service. Twenty years later, he had acquired a sur-



pliced choir and daily communion. He also lighted the altar candles and mixed the chalice but he did not wear vestments 'at the present time'.

Rather, the real changes found at St Paul's – and then

place, Wagner suggested that church buildings were vehicles of communication – almost texts in their own right: 'The very stones and beam cry out of the wall, and tell that all is fixed design, and one good whole.' In this interpretation, even 'Our grave yard is a solemn



at other churches like St Michael's – were more profound and encompassing. They were so overwhelming, indeed, that they helped transform not just Brighton but churches throughout the country. And they were changes which didn't just affect high churchmen. They changed the way that almost everyone encountered and experienced church buildings.

The eighteenth-century had seen churches essentially as containers for worship. Their key function was as a place where people could listen to sermons. They were preaching boxes and celebrated as such. When the King's Chapel at Brighton Pavilion was consecrated in 1822, for example, the preacher feted not the building, but the worship that took place within it. At the consecration of Trinity Chapel – later Holy Trinity Church – in 1826, no mention was made of the building at all.

At the consecration of St Paul's in 1849 something very different was celebrated – and it wasn't just celebrated by high churchmen. Ritualists like Arthur Wagner were joined by rationalists like the Archdeacon Julius Hare, and by less parti-pris figures like the Dean of Chichester, George Chandler, in explaining the church building in quite new and different ways. That old high churchman, Henry Wagner, spoke for them all in his sermon. He observed that this new church represented a new understanding of the church: not as an inert container, but as an active agent in its own right.

Two factors were particularly important in this new understanding of ecclesiastical architecture. In the first

sermon.' Secondly, and just as importantly, he claimed that church buildings were an engine of emotion. 'In all ages', he noted, 'human nature is substantially the same. It hath senses to be affected, and an imagination keenly susceptible of external impressions.'

These two claims – the idea of the building as a text, and the belief that churches could shape the emotional lives of their inhabitants – were echoed in arguments made by a range of other people. Newman said much the same at the consecration of his little church in the Oxford suburb of Littlemore. Keble did something similar as he rebuilt Hursley church in Hampshire. Through publications, sermons, and other media this new conception of the church was broadcast throughout the world.

Horsell, and the other Brighton Protestant polemicists, were thus entirely right to recognize that they were up against something big – even if they were probably wrong about what it was that they were fighting. But they lost, and the conception of the church they opposed won out. It can be seen in the rich symbolism and stunning scale of St Michael's, of course. But it can also be found in churches almost everywhere. And the fact that we still expect to 'read' a church, we still expect to be moved by a church, reveals, still more, that the tremendous change which took place more than a century ago continues to shape our experience today.



# Jackie Lovesey's suspicions about angels

It must be summer. The time has come round for the Friends of St. Michael and All Angels Annual Dinner. What a popular event and always so well attended.

It was a joyous evening and the church looked exquisite. I still haven't got used to dining tables, bottles of wine and cocktail dresses in the church, but I think I could! It was a lovely scene.

We were greeted with a glass of bubbles, canapés and the opportunity to chat with friends and meet new ones.

I believe that there is a very special group of ladies who plan, sample and produce these very special dinners.

The menu was delightful. We started with chilled pear and pea soup – a combination that was delicious and new to me. This was followed by duck braised in ginger, soy and star anise, with barley risotto, green beans and baby carrots. This was so lovely. I am hoping to get the recipe but I'm not sure how closely they protect their sources (or do I mean sauces?)

This wonderful occasion did not stop there. Next was mouth-watering lemon syllabub with homemade shortbread biscuits. All this was served followed by cheese, biscuits and coffee.

The Friends have a delightful system by which every table has a host or hostess who acts as 'mum' when it comes to serving the food and ensuring that guests have all that they need.

We had short welcoming speeches from Father Robert, and from Chris Dawes, Chair of the Friends.

We were entertained by 'The Cocktail Party' an acapella singing group making the whole event a very sophisticated one.

A tremendous amount of work must have been carried out by the organiser and the catering committee, who appear to have a great deal of fun in this wonderful achievement. I haven't met St Michael, but I think I know who the 'Angels' are!



Photo: Tubbs



Photo: Tubbs



Photo: Tubbs