



the flyer

Keeping the Fun in Fund-raising

Chris Dawes Chair of the Friends

This edition of *The Flyer* records the success of some recent Friends events: the quality of guest speakers, the interest and conviviality of the Friends community and the amazing work done by volunteers to achieve those things.

But, of course, the other result and mark of success is raising more funds to support our objective of assisting the PCC (Parochial Church Council) to preserve, repair, maintain and improve St Michael's - and especially the artistically and historically important elements of the Church - for the benefit of all.

It has been a little while since I reported on how the Committee had applied Friends' funds to these ends and the current focus of fund-raising efforts. Having just reached the milestone of £40,000 in the Friends account, now is a moment to take stock once more.

The Friends work is in support of the PCC's priorities as they match Friends priorities and the last major contribution was made in 2017, towards the urgent repairs needed to conserve the West Rose Window of the Burges side of the church.

Since then, we have been fortunate that no major urgent conservation work has been identified. We therefore turned to the 'improvement' element of our remit and committed £10,000 of our resources towards the project to repair, restore and display St Michael's important historic vestments (see *The Flyer* June 2018).

We proposed this as 'match-funding' and, as yet, the PCC has been unable to commit further church resources to the project: the day to day maintenance of this historic edifice of course remains the first call on Church funds: in the last year alone, £10,000 had to be spent on general maintenance and £2,500 on a new boiler.

We hope that the Vestments Project can be pursued further, and our financial commitment remains ear-marked.

We have enthusiastically welcomed the PCC's recent work to pursue further external funding towards the long-standing ambition to upgrade St Michael's lighting: to illuminate the highlights of its decoration and to facilitate both community use and Church worship. As lighting technology has developed and costs have decreased in respect of the lighting equipment itself (as opposed to installation costs), the scope for incremental phasing of the project in modest tranches

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The Moon: art, science and culture

Ian Cramond



A packed church welcomed Dr Alexandra Loske of the University of Sussex and Dr Robert Massey of the Royal Astronomical Society for a fascinating joint presentation on the cultural, artistic and scientific significance of the moon for humanity across millennia. This year, of course, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing and to commemorate the event in 2018 Alexandra and Robert wrote a book on this enduring theme and have embarked on a UK wide lecture tour.

It is rather sobering to speculate that the moon is perhaps the only external object all human beings have contemplated, hence the diversity of significance that is attributed to it: love, romance, femininity, spirituality. It influences our language. As Alexandra reminded us, only a few days earlier Prince Harry had spoken of being 'over the moon' at the birth of his first child.

We have sought to depict it from the cave paintings of Lascaux 17,000 years ago to Aleksandra Mir's 1999 transformation of a stretch of Dutch beach into a lunar landscape. Perhaps surprisingly, first attempts in Western Art at naturalistic representations of the moon appear before the invention of the telescope in the early seventeenth century; for example, in the work of van Eyck, one of whose 'moons' is remarkably accurate in that it represents a waning phase.

Both speakers stressed the importance of the telescope in our understanding of the moon and the consequent implications for both artists and scientists. It was no longer a smooth silver disc in the sky, but a rugged crater scarred landscape.



One enormously influential artist whose work reflects this greater understanding of the moon is Adam Elsheimer: his *Flight into Egypt* (1609) depicts the moon illuminating and protecting the Holy Family. Similarly, Rubens uses the moon to set the mood in *Landscape by Moonlight* (1635-40).

But art is not a mechanistic response to scientific discovery; it is about emotions, feelings, instincts and nowhere was this more obvious than in the art of the romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As Alexandra put it 'moons were everywhere' and endowed with quasi spiritual qualities. We saw examples from the work of Caspar David Friedrich - *Moon over the sea* (1822) and Samuel Palmer -

Harvest Moon (1833). So essential was the moon to the romantic sensibility that a school emerged in Germany known as the 'Lunar Painters'.

In the course of the nineteenth century there were two developments of significance for shaping our attitudes to the moon; photography and fiction. In 1874 James Nay Smith and James Carpenter published a text on lunar

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The Moon continued

geology accompanied by photographs. The photographs were not of the moon itself as cameras of the time were incapable of that sort of shot, but rather photographs of lunar models painstakingly constructed from telescopic evidence. The book did much to popularise lunar studies.



At the same time we see a fascination among authors of the period with the possibility of travel to the moon, for example Jules Verne: *From Earth to Moon* (1865), HG Wells: *The First Men in The Moon* (1901). In 1902 the first space film appeared in the form of *Trip to the Moon* by Georges Méliès (1902). Of course, all this was in the realm of science fiction, but it did promote the idea of the possibility of moon travel at some time in the future. In fact within the lifetime of someone who might have seen the Méliès film, humans set foot on this object which had been the subject of so much speculation over time.

In his background to the Apollo mission of 1969 Robert reminded us of some of the obstacles faced, not least the 250,000 miles distance which separates earth from the moon. However, the development of rocket technology in the Second World War, competitive Cold War rivalries between the USSR and the USA, all played a part in making the unthinkable a realistic proposition leading to President Kennedy's pledge to put a man on the moon 'within seven years'. That was 50 years ago; the last Apollo mission was in 1972. What next?

Robert was sceptical of talk of exploiting the moon's mineral resources but saw opportunities for international co-operation on the moon (moon villages) which he thought a more realistic proposition than voyages to Mars.

But has this newfound familiarity with the moon deprived us of the fascination it has exercised over us for so long? It would appear not. Painters and conceptual artists continue to respond to the moon creatively and imaginatively. The canvasses of Mark Rothko - *Seagram Murals* (1969) and Roy Lichtenstein *Moonscape* (1964) all bear witness to the hold the moon continues to exert over us.

And finally, as if to emphasise the point, in the audience that evening we were fortunate to have the young Brighton based artist Fergus Hare. In 2017 Fergus held an exhibition of twenty charcoal drawings of the moon and other cosmic phenomena.

Fund raising continued

has increased. Phasing has always seemed to the Friends the only practicable approach to such a costly scheme – perhaps £100,000 in all.

We also hope that dividing works into more modest bites might provide opportunities for individual Friends to make more personal contributions towards key elements of St Michael's.

In addition, we are considering the scope for the Friends to contribute further to conservation of the paper wall finishes of the Bodley Church: work to stabilise these was the first project of the renewed Friends in 2010-11. This was one of the items identified for further action in the last Quinquennial Review for the PCC: other work

was less closely related to Friends' priorities.

If Friends have other thoughts, we'd be happy to hear them.

Whatever else we might do, we are keen to remain in a position to support the major projects when either Church or grant funds become available, and be ready to help financially or otherwise in the case of unforeseen emergencies. To that end we want to continue to build up our resources and maintain our programme of events to delight and engage, stimulate and entertain – and keep the FUN in our fund-raising.

Sue Berry on Anglo-Catholicism in Brighton

Marisa Linton

On 29th March, Dr Sue Berry, a well-known local historian, lecturer and researcher came to St Michael's to give us a fascinating talk on 'Ritual and Riot – the Impact of Anglo-Catholicism in Victorian and Edwardian Brighton, c. 1830-1914.' The church was packed - over a hundred people were there to hear Sue's talk. It may be that some members of the audience were hoping to escape the bitter debates over Brexit, on the day that Brexit failed to materialise.

What we found from Sue's talk was that England in the late nineteenth century was also subject to vehement disputes that divided communities, but in this case the disputes had religious controversies at their heart.

The church looked at its most exquisite, as the last light of the day filtered through the stained glass windows, with their jewel-bright colours. Yet, as we soon learned, in Victorian times many people strongly objected to the stained glass, to the statues of saints, to the vestments of clergy, to candles, to incense, as carrying an aura of 'Catholicism'. St Michael's and All Angels was one of a number of churches in Brighton, along with St Paul's in West Street, St Bartholomew's, and several others, that were deemed by evangelical Protestants to be subverting the proper vision of the Church of England.

The Reverend Arthur Wagner was a leading figure of the Anglo-Catholic movement in late Victorian Brighton, devoting his long career and much of his personal funds to reviving the 'beauty of holiness' in churches and chapels in Brighton and the surrounding area. It was especially important to Wagner to create beautiful places of worship for the poor, with bright colours, rituals, and a wealth of decoration, in place of the austere, even severe, arrangements that had been typical of English churches since the Reformation.

We heard much about Wagner's extraordinary life from Sue, but also about a host of lesser known figures who were part of the movement. And we heard about the concerted hostility, constant heckling, and even open aggression with which many were confronted. In 1868 one of Wagner's curates, the Reverend John Purchas, was chased across the Steine by a furious mob, and had to take refuge in a hackney cab, surrounded by a dangerous crowd.

Authorities and bishops were also hostile – another curate was imprisoned in 1880 for his ritual practices with their aura of Catholicism. As Sue told us, it took a lot of courage to create the Anglo-Catholic churches that survive to be such a significant historical legacy for us, and a source of beauty and delight. Wagner would have been pleased.

A Career in Opera Friday 27th September 7.30 pm

The Friends of St Michael's are welcoming the award-winning soprano Nadine Benjamin accompanied by pianist Andrew Robinson. She will be singing and talking about her exciting journey to becoming a successful Opera singer and her role as founder of 'Everybody Can' a platform to encourage other to believe in themselves.

The charismatic singer, renowned for her performance on the operatic stage and the concert platform. She will be singing arias by Verdi, Strauss and Berg as well as performing songs from the American song book. Nadine is an English National Opera Harewood Artist who made her debut with the Company as Clara in Porgy and Bess and Musetta in La Boheme. She has given numerous solo recitals at Winchester Cathedral, Coventry Cathedral, St Paul's Church, Covent Garden, St James's Church, Piccadilly, London



Nadine Benjamin

Wallis Simpson earned renown for her hospitality, as have The Friends

Sally Richardson

What a delightful idea this is: to set tables in the beautiful interior of the church, to provide warm welcome and chilled wine, and to serve a delicious lunch to convivial and friendly diners. Once again, a splendid meal from Simon Thompson – thank you from us all. Then as we relax and sit back, a well-known author describes how the book under discussion came to be written.



On this occasion it was Anna Pasternak telling us, with fluency and passion, how she felt it almost a mission to restore reputations of women she believed had been unfairly treated at the time by the public and thereafter, by history. Anna felt that Wallis Simpson fell into this category and after researching extensively to uncover what sort of person she really was, had come to admire her, even to adore her.

Anna sought also to understand more fully the bond between Edward VIII and Wallis that led him to abdicate in 1936 before his coronation took place in order not to have to reign alone, without her at his side. Edward and Wallis had met by chance, in 1931, when Wallis and her husband Ernest Aldrich Simpson were invited to a house party as a last-minute replacement for another couple – so last minute was it that Wallis had to be taught how to curtsy on the train while travelling there.

Anna described in detail the run up to the abdication of Edward VIII – the pressures on him by the royal family, by Parliament, by the church, to break with

Wallis Simpson (still at that time married to Ernest) and – surprising to us today, the voluntary black-out by the British press right up until 10 days before the abdication. But this silence carried with it its own backlash – the general public were caught unawares and vented their fury on the American socialite who ‘stole’ their king.

Anna’s conclusions were that Wallis would actually have stepped away from Edward to leave him free to reign, but that he had a very great need, perhaps an unusual and excessive need, for her support and would not contemplate such a demanding life role without her. He believed that ‘it would all blow over’ and soon they could return and live in England. His permanent exile was a great grief. Wallis shored herself up with her own armour – dressing exquisitely, furnishing with impeccable taste, cherishing those close friends who did not abandon her, and earning renown for her hospitality.



Anna was very aware of the wider picture – how we the public are complicit in the exaggerated and distorted way we regard the royals – on one hand, building them up and idolising them; on the other hand, casting them down if they seem to have feet of clay. She reminded us of the trajectory of the story of Diana, Charles and Camilla, and found echoes today in the ‘trolls’ who persecute Meghan. So we, participant ‘royal watchers’ for this occasion, could reflect and perhaps resolve that ordinary mortals should be treated as such – no more and no less.