



The Annual Icicles Party 2022

Angela Devas

(Faux) furs dusted off, thermals applied and we bravely processed in the dark and cold towards the cavernous double church in a spirit of icy trepidation. But no need to be daunted; at the entrance glowed two candle-lit lanterns guiding our way up the steps (thoughtfully placed there by Jonathan Prichard and Margit Latter) to lead us into the light.



Inside Michael Fisher offered us mulled wine and very soon amuse-bouches circulated. Later, Gabi Tubbs proffered soup in miniature cups for those not already on the wine.

We clustered together in the Bodley part of the church gorgeously lit by the chandelier, refurbished courtesy of the Friends, as Tom Cosgrove, the churchwarden, reminded us. How lovely to be drinking under the fruits of our own generosity. Again, Friends contributions allowed for the 18th century sacristy lamp in the Bodley church to be re-vamped and it shone brightly on its altar.

As the shadows of the Burges church deepened, giving rise to thoughts of winter ghouls lurking in the deep gloom of that part of the church, Chris Dawes, chair of the Friends reminded us of forthcoming dates.

Warmed by hospitality, good conversation (topics ranged from architecture in Liverpool to the joys of (re)socialising and inevitably the C word which could not altogether be banned) we made our ways home feeling the power and majesty of St Michael's glowing within us, even if we were grateful for our own home's robust central heating that hopefully greeted all of us on our return.



Andy Sturgeon

Making the Modern Garden

Ann Smith



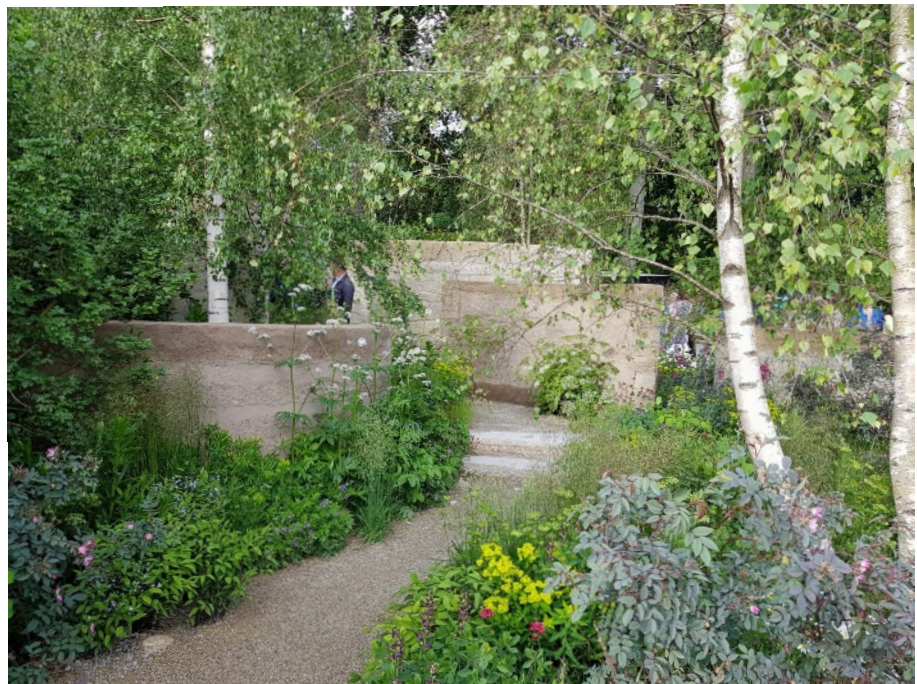
Billed as informative and entertaining, Andy Sturgeon's presentation did not disappoint. He talked us through 2,000 years of garden design: the Alhambra, Roman gardens, the Taj Mahal, French classicism, English landscaping, Capability Brown, Gertrude Jekyll and thence to the gardens at Chelsea and of course, Andy himself.

He talked about folds and slopes, of landscape connected to architecture, how the garden must connect to the buildings and how the designer must work with this and of course with the client.

Inspiration comes from many sources: a holiday find of layered rock in Australia led to the same effect being produced from huge sections of oak for Chelsea. Van Gogh's brush strokes on his well-known painting of sunflowers are like curved layers of rock inspiring hard curved shapes, created first by rolling paper round a pencil until finally there are curved white 'rocks' in a garden.

A garden should bring people into contact with nature; you should walk through a garden like you walk through a wood, with steps and paths and strategic seating and of course the planting influenced by the light.

Through their gardens, linked of course to a house, we got a glimpse of clients – in the Isle of Wight – a garden set on a hill and a walk-through aquarium. Another with a very large house and a very large budget rejected a Barbara Hepworth



sculpture because she was no longer alive but added fairy lights to his garden.

There was a sense that other commissions were more congenial if no less challenging: the gardens at the conversion of the Battersea Power Station of differing sizes, some linked to individual owners while others were narrow communal walk-through gardens.

Gardens will change despite the 2016 Paris climate agreement. Florida and Central America are already showing the effects and by 2060 London and south-east England will be like Barcelona is now. Farewell silver birch.

The final image was optimistic, a lush garden with foliage and flowers.

The Royal Pavilion: History and Architecture

David Beevers: former Keeper of The Royal Pavilion

Alison Minns

The church was dramatically illuminated with early evening rays of sunshine when newly retired Keeper of the Royal Pavilion, David Beevers illuminated the eagerly attentive audience with information and insight about our fantastical Royal Pavilion – sometimes likened to the Kremlin.

David talked us through the building's history from its origin as Henry Holland's neoclassical marine pavilion, through its planned but never completed redesign by Humphrey Repton, its final design and execution by John Nash (along with the inspiration of designers the Craces, the Daniels and Robert Jones), its regrettable striping by Victoria, its use as a makeshift hospital during WWI, its purchase by the council for £50k in 1850, the use of some of its rooms as council meeting rooms in the 1960s and 70s, to the recent loan of splendid, sumptuous and significant objects by Her Majesty The Queen.



photo: Minns

Opinion was divided on George as Regent/monarch, though most of the contemporary satirical caricatures leave no doubt about his love of excess. We learned fascinating facts about him: he loved gilding, he loved drapery, he loved all things Chinese, and he loved display and ostentation rather than practicality. William Porden's Dome and stable complex, built in 1803 was the first building in Europe of any size to be built in the Indian style.

George was determined to erect a construction that topped the Dome's dominating presence and was influenced by Indian-inspired Sezincote. David explained how the interior of the Pavilion looked backwards to the fashion for all things Chinese while the exterior, with its Indian influences looked forwards.

Humphrey Repton produced one of his red books, revealing before and after designs for his proposed Pavilion but he was injured in a carriage accident (David revealed this to be the fate of several individuals connected with the Pavilion) and his plans were never carried out. John Nash, then aged 63, was subsequently engaged by George, aged 53. Nash, always surrounded by scandal, was the perfect choice for George. His Pavilion was designed to look like a temporary garden structure and the exotic exterior must have looked magnificent illuminated by gas flares.

David 'walked' us through the rooms explaining the significance of the tent motif, the use of the Long Gallery for promenades, the luxurious wall to wall carpets, the chandeliers (the most significant in the world, in David's view), the kitchen where 'celebrity chef' Carême worked (and from where at least one guest suffered food poisoning). George, of course showed a great interest in his stomach and at least a quarter of the space of the Pavilion was given over to the preparation and consumption of food.

When William Duke of Clarence became monarch in 1830 he said of the Pavilion 'I would never have built such a building myself, but since it's here, I'll enjoy it.' Wise move!

Royal Pavilion cont.

When the railway came to Brighton in 1841 it brought a new type of visitor and ended the era of the town as an exclusive Regency resort. At that time, Brighton had the highest growth rate of any town in Europe. By the end of 1846, Victoria had removed 137 loads of furniture and fittings to London, most to Buckingham Palace. And more vandalism was to come. One third of the estate was demolished after 1850: kitchen, pantry, offices, the South Gate... And then, between 1914-16 the Pavilion became a hospital for wounded soldiers and the kitchen became an operating theatre.

More recently, disaster has struck the Pavilion in the shape of arson and falling masonry but currently the interior is looking splendid, especially the Banqueting Room, the Music Room

and the Saloon. The latter, designed by Robert Jones has just been restored. David revealed that Jones is felt to be such a common name that anyone possessing it faces oblivion. (This, it seems is why St Michael's very own Edward Burne-Jones hyphenated his name to make it more memorable.)

Of the Royal Pavilion, John Betjeman wryly remarked 'No-one is ever remembered for saving money.' How lucky we are that George was such a spendthrift!

Thanks to all the organisers of such a splendid evening and especial thanks to David for such a tour de force. His expertise, learning, knowledge and dry wit wowed his audience. The Friends are so lucky to have such a distinguished and delightful academic as a member.

Leighton House re-opens

Chris Dawes

Friends may like to note that Leighton House in Holland Park Road, London has re-opened after a major project to improve access and facilities. The house retains its unique appeal with an exceptional collection of Victorian art displayed throughout a suite of Leighton's original interiors, including the extraordinary Arab Hall and Leighton's studio. The recent extension provides some new exhibition space and the De Morgan café, which opens on to the garden: these can be visited free. A new lift and a helical staircase have been sympathetically added – the latter has an impressive new work *Oneness* by Shahrzad Ghaferi, inspired by a poem of Rumi's and shown in the photograph partially obscured by our Chairman. Leighton was a contemporary of William Burges, architect of the larger portion of St Michael's, whose own house *The Tower House* (not open) is close to Leighton's (and now occupied by Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page) among a number of Victorian artists' houses of the Holland Park Circle. A highly wrought platter designed by Burges is on display in Leighton House, which is open Weds-Mon, 10am-5.30pm (tickets from £11 to the main house).



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The Friends Annual Dinner 2022

Suzanne Hodgart



The dinner is usually held in the summer, but because of the Covid restrictions of 2020-21, we were only able now to celebrate.

Our very special event went ahead after careful consideration, in the shadow of the death of The Queen, with a particular emphasis on the Friends as a community.

The church was beautifully lit - the stained glass glimmering in the dusk and nine tables were set with beautiful flowers arranged by Coreen Sears. And people who had not met for so long were greeting each other enthusiastically. The presence of Father Robert Fayers, previously of this parish who had lived for many years in the Vicarage in Montpelier Villas, was an unexpected pleasure.

The conversation, mostly driven by the week's news, was sombre, but also full of laughter. Some people exchanged memories of meeting the Queen and almost everyone talked about her. We were to have a new monarch and we already had a new Prime Minister in the space of forty-eight hours. Speculation and hope were the order of the day.



As always there was a feast, overseen by the usual teams of Jane Osler and Simon Thompson. David Sears and Gabi Tubbs dodged in among the tables capturing the photographs. Chris Dawes, Chair of the Friends, proposed a toast to the new King, and most of us raised a glass, stumbling over the word King for the first time. A perfect moment to be shared with all our Friends.

The Editor's Interview

Tony Bailey

You and your wife Ann Smith have been stalwarts of the Friends for a considerable time. When did you get involved?

Ann was the first to be involved in the re-founding of The Friends. I joined in a little later, and I was present at the launch evenings in 2010. I have no special memories of those first few months except of Ann and Jonathan Prichard meeting around our kitchen table to plan and organise.

Later, I was drawn into helping with setting up the church for events. It was a bit of a challenge to arrange seating in different ways to reflect the nature of the event. The semi-circular "arena" pattern became the norm for talks and arranging the large tables for the dinner required some thought.

I volunteered to design posters and this has given me great pleasure – not least because the only thing the Art teacher at Rotherham Grammar School ever taught me was that I couldn't do it. Later, I took on the design and the layout of The Flyer.



What do you think has been particularly successful?

I think most Friends would regard the financial support we provide as the most important achievement.

In the twelve years since the re-found-

ing The Friends have raised over £100,000 and perhaps the greatest single contribution was to help save the great west window and the rose windows which were in danger of collapse in the face of strong winds.

But, for me, the friendships that I and many others have formed through meeting at the many social and cultural events we organise is of equal importance. We can take great pride from our reputation as the friendliest, most welcoming, of Brighton societies.



Have there been any disasters you're brave enough to share with us?

Not so much a disaster as a very near miss!

At one of our Indian evenings we ordered a meal from Chaula's in Little East Street. I collected the authentic Indian heaters and serving bowls from the restaurant and set them up in the corridor outside the hall to serve the food buffet style.

Ann and I had invited Vinod and Meena Mashru to join us. When the food arrived they offered to help serve it. We slipped out of the meeting to prepare. Vinod took one look at the array of bowls and heaters and said "this is completely wrong. The supports for the heaters are missing. You can't serve the food from these". We had fifteen minutes to sort this out. Calming my rising panic, Vinod took charge, called the restaurant and went down to Little East Street to collect the missing parts. He arrived back with minutes to spare before guests streamed out of the hall to be served.

If you had a magic wand, what would you change concerning the Friends?

I would love to see younger people "of all faiths and none" joining the Friends and becoming involved in the committee and organising events.

If there was one other change, it would be to see some of these younger people turning their attention to helping with serious fund raising. So far, we have been able to support the church in the preservation of some of its very important cultural artifacts. But the original re-founding vision recognised that the immense architectural and cultural importance of St Michael's demands major amenity improvements which are of vital importance if it is to prosper as a place of worship and a hub for community events in the 21st century. This would be the fund raisers' goal.

The Brighton Connection

Spencer Gore and the Camden Town Group

A talk by

Nicola Coleby

David Robson

How marvellous to sit in the main nave of St. Michael's and watch the setting sun fill the chancel with a post-impressionist glow of golden light and how comforting to be together again with real people listening to a real speaker!

Nicola Coleby's main purpose was to introduce the exhibition then on show in the Museum's Fine Art Gallery. It included paintings by members of the Camden Town Group that are held by the Museum and set out to reproduce, at least in spirit, a similar exhibition that was held in the Public Art Galleries at the end of 1913. The Camden Town Group was a collection of sixteen exclusively male painters who shared an interest in post-impressionism and gathered around Walter Sickert. Formed in 1911 it lasted

only two years and broke up soon after the Brighton exhibition as its members gravitated towards more modernist positions.

The original exhibition was the brainchild of Spencer Gore who had spent the summer of 2013 staying in the Brunswick Square home of occasional painter and patron Walter Taylor. It was there that he painted 'The West Pier, Brighton', which could be seen in the 2022 show. This also included work by Walter Sickert, Harold Gilman and Robert Bevan, all of whom were represented in the original exhibition. Nicola described the 'Brighton-Dieppe' connection and the links that existed between members of the



Group and French painters like Degas.

However, Nicola's talk offered much more: she also introduced us to Henry Roberts (1870-1951), who preceded Clifford Musgrave as Librarian and Director of the Museum and the Royal Pavilion. The Museum had opened in 1861 and moved to its present premises in 1873. Roberts was appointed Librarian and Museum Director in 1906 and almost immediately set to work organising a series of ground breaking exhibitions. The first of these, held during the summer of 1910, had the title 'Modern French Art' and was the first such exhibition to be shown in Britain. This was followed at regular intervals by exhibitions on the modern art of Italy, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland, Russia and

Japan, all of which attracted large numbers of visitors and put Brighton's Art Galleries at the cutting edge of the British art-scene.

Roberts played a significant role in the organisation of the Royal Pavilion as a hospital during World War I and in 1920 he was made the first director of the Royal Pavilion Estate. In 1933, he was forced to retire but stayed on as the resident curator of Preston Manor until his death in 1951.



Nicola reminded us that our Art Gallery played an important role in the cultural life of what was then the town of Brighton during the early decades of the 20th century, and that it is the guardian of a considerable collection of paintings, only a small number of which can be displayed at any one time. Inevitably this might lead one to wonder why it has shrunk to become a mere sub-section of the museum, and why the new City of Brighton and Hove has not established a proper dedicated art gallery, to match those in Eastbourne, Hastings and Chichester and to revive the tradition established by Henry Roberts. But where to put it? How about the former offices and print works of the Brighton and Hove Herald, built by John Leopold Denman in 1928, owned by the City and now lying empty and somewhat derelict beside the Pavilion's South Gate?

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Great Gig in the Sky

Alexandra Loske muses on Turner and Constable's inimitable skies; **Friday 2 December**



Christmass Wreathmaking

under the tutelage of expert **Simon Thompson**
weeks beginning 4 December or 11 December



Icicles Party January 27th