

Parish Weekend at Aylesford

Elspeth Fearn



The weekend of 16 to 18 June saw the RTM Parish Weekend held at our usual venue of The Friars, Aylesford in Kent. We were last there in October 2014 and although Parish Weekends are normally held every two years, there was a longer gap this time. Because of the two interregnums during 2015 – 2016 it was agreed to wait until all our new clergy were in post before holding the weekend. Being at Aylesford in June rather than October meant that we really benefited from the lovely summer weather (although sometimes a little too hot!). It was wonderful to walk around and enjoy the beautiful grounds in sunshine and to sit out chatting and socialising with each other during the long light evenings. Aylesford had been a priory founded in 1242 by the first Carmelites to come from the Holy Land under the patronage of the Crusader Richard de Grey. It was closed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries but after centuries as a private house was reopened as a House of God by the return of the Carmelite Friars in 1949. The

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Pilgrims' Hall in which we ate our meals is the oldest building at Aylesford and offered hospitality and accommodation to the many medieval pilgrims making their way along the Pilgrims Way to Canterbury.

The Parish Weekend takes a lot of planning and hard work. In November last year the Revd. Wilma Roest got in touch with people in the congregations who had been involved with planning Parish Weekends in the past to get their experience and advice. Then a Planning/Organising Group was set up and held its first meetings at the end of November 2016 and early January 2017 meeting regularly thereafter. The attention to detail showed in that when you arrived at Aylesford on the



Reverend Wilma Roest with Dr Chloë Reddaway
Photo: Charles Stillier

Friday, as well as all the necessary paperwork and the key to your room, you were also given a bottle of water – very welcome. We have Wilma, Emma Meredith, Peter and Carole Cregeen, Mary Ricketts, Neil Summers, Ruth Martin, Sarah Percival, Tina Roberts at the Parish Office on the administration side and Helen Williams, our Children and Young Person' Ministry Leader for the children's programme to thank for a special Weekend.

Altogether there were 60 adults and 7 children at the Weekend. It was so good to have children there as at the 2014 Weekend, sadly, there had been none. Much of the children's programme, organised by Helen Williams and tirelessly assisted by Alice Eastaugh and James Rushby, was able to take place outside. So many people in their comments after the weekend, said how wonderful it was to have the children at the Weekend this time – 'I very much enjoyed the confirmation of the Team Ministry as a family. The children contributed a great deal to this.'

The weekend had as its theme 'Creating God – Exploring Theology through the Arts', an idea which stemmed from an image on a Christmas card in Wilma's office which many of the Planning Group commented on at the beginning of the planning process. The Arts and God seemed a very promising and exciting theme, especially with so many people in Richmond Team Ministry having artistic interests or talents. On the Saturday three distinguished speakers, chosen for their links to the arts, addressed us all. Firstly Graham Cole, the actor whose many roles included 22 years as PC Tony Stamp in *The Bill*, in conversation with Peter Cregeen about the difficulties and challenges of being an active Christian in the theatrical profession. He was followed by Dr Chloë Reddaway, a member of St Mary's congregation, who is Howard and Roberta Ahmanson Fellow in Art and Religion at the National Gallery, who through various Renaissance paintings from the Gallery addressed the question of how do you paint Christ, who is both Man and God. Finally later in the day the Revd. Professor June Boyce Tillman, priest, theologian, musician and composer from the University of Winchester, talked about the life and works of Hildegard of Bingen on whom she is an expert, in a session which combined a lecture, poetry, music and not least some short bouts of exercise for the audience! One comment said of the weekend – 'Not having been before it was a surprise, in the best possible way. Inspiring, thought provoking.'

Earlier in the afternoon there had a been a free period where you could choose from a variety of things to do, for example, how to write

intercessions or a tour of the Priory or you could visit the village at Aylesford or the on-site pottery which makes beautiful pots. Finally, on Saturday evening we had our customary home entertainment culminating in community singing led and accompanied on the piano by Fenella Warden.

At the heart of our Weekend however were the services in St Joseph's Chapel where we came together to worship God and to thank Him for the arts. The Chapel has many ceramic pieces on the wall made by the Polish artist Adam Kossowski, who arrived in England in 1943 as a refugee from Soviet labour camps and from 1950-1972 created over 100 different pieces of art for Aylesford – ceramic, tempera, and oil painting, wrought iron and stained glass. Seated in the chapel and looking at the ceramic panels which tell their stories in a very clear

way I was reminded of the wall paintings that so transfixed medieval worshippers.

The Weekend was a very positive experience. Emma Meredith, speaking to **TEAMtalk**, said 'I was very pleased that the theme seemed to catch everyone's imagination. The speakers were all amazing in their own extraordinary ways and then the fun in the evening – especially the Saturday night extravaganza. It was so nice to spend more time with everyone, from all three churches,. It's a big family get together and I found it so special.'

In Wilma's words 'The Parish Weekend was a celebration of Art and Theology, and we learned that each one of us, irrespective of age, has something to offer in our exploration of the nature of God. From snails in Renaissance paintings to snails made of clay, the weekend was filled with moments of joyful discovery.'



St Joseph's Chapel, The Friars

Photo: Charles Stiller

Victorian Society evening at St John the Divine

Paul Bunnage

St John's hosted, on 6 July, an event for members of the Victorian Society, the RTM and the local community with a programme of talks and displays, the primary focus of which was to present the extensive restoration of the Lady Chapel (2014-16) by Howell & Howell and outline further projects.

Following an introduction by Revd Neil Summers, Paul Velluet gave a brief history of the church up to the building of the new chancel and Lady Chapel in 1905 by the architect Arthur Grove who was responsible for much of the Arts & Crafts furnishing.



Revd Neil Summers gives the introduction to the Victorian Society evening
Photo: Peter Moore



Peter Cormack

Photo: Peter Moore

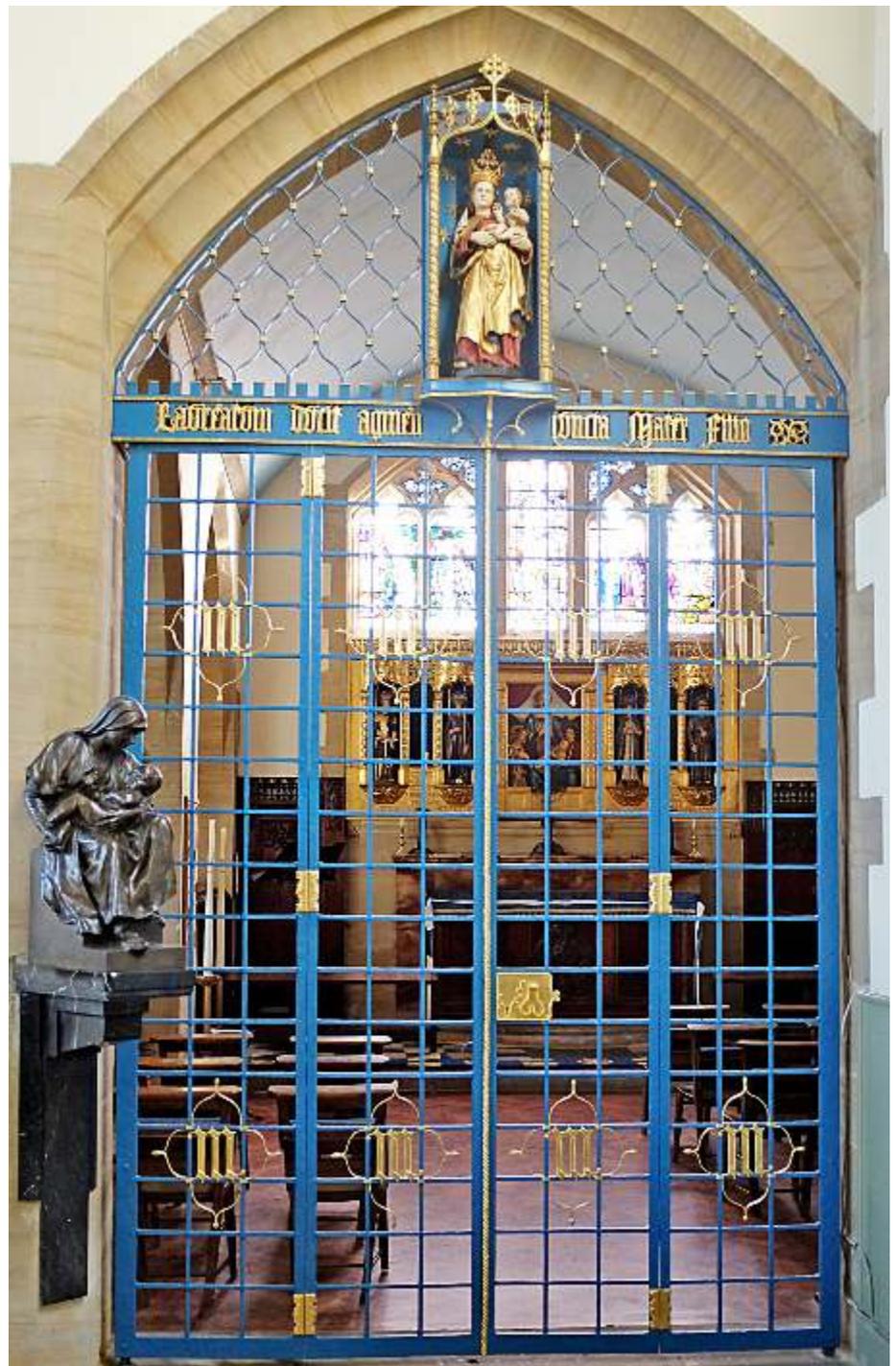
St John's is fortunate to have examples of high quality work by many of the leading Arts & Crafts designers and artists, described in a detailed talk by Peter Cormack, distinguished Arts & Crafts specialist. Many of these figures were linked either by common influences (eg through the architects J. D. Sedding and E. S. Prior) and by the practical influence of mutual friendships (Arthur Grove and MacDonald Gill) and their working relationships (Ernest Gimson, Henry Wilson, Eric Gill, Christopher Whall, W. Bainbridge Reynolds, all of whose work can be seen here), and through the London Central School of Arts where many studied or taught.

Peter Cormack highlighted in his talk the quality and importance of the work of Christopher Whall, the leading stained glass designer of the period, whose fine East window in the Lady Chapel (partly by his daughter Veronica) is one of the glories of the church. Christopher Whall, a Roman Catholic convert, often used Catholic themes in his designs, as here, where the window features the Five

Joyful Mysteries of Our Lady. He later enlarged on these observations in a Radio 4 interview on the 'Sunday' programme on the subject of Arts & Crafts stained glass at SJD broadcast on 30 July.

Michael O'Dell described the restoration of the Lady Chapel: cleaning of the gilded reredos with statues by Max Gill and central painting by Dorothy Smirke, cleaning of the windows and the statue of Our Lady, and the repainting and regilding of the screen and gates by Bainbridge Reynolds. An Arts & Crafts lectern by John E. C. Carr was acquired by St John's in 2016; this represents an important discovery in metalwork of the period – restoration is planned. A future major restoration project will be the painted triptych above the High Altar, and of some of SJD's substantial and very fine collection of embroidered altar frontals, banners and vestments, many items of which are in regular use.

Gill Gregorowski spoke about the textiles, embroidered largely in-house by a group of women working from the 1880s under the guidance of Mrs Mary Tylee, wife of the priest, and formalised as a guild with over 20 members by 1905: it functioned for around 85 years and in later years its work was often sent abroad. Running alongside this work in the 1880s and 1890s was the Mothers' Meeting making and selling clothes for the poor of the parish. Research has brought much documentation, embroidery silks, offcuts of fabric, ribbons and braid to light, an exhibition of which complemented Gill's talk. A display of photographs illustrated the history of the church and a slideshow the restoration story.



Lady Chapel Gates

Photo: Paul Bunnage

The programme concluded with a description by Mark Laflin, Director of Music, of the history of the rare Beale & Thynne organ of 1896, and a short demonstration of its qualities. A restoration is planned in the longer term.

Funds for restoration have been raised by the congregation, augmented by a substantial donation from the Heritage of London Trust for the screen and gates, and a share of the proceeds from this Victorian Society event.

New Director of Music at St Mary Magdalene

Earlier this year Alex Knight was appointed Director of Music at St Mary Magdalene.

Alex started playing the piano at the age of four after his parents gave him a 1-octave 'Tap a Tune' which played nursery rhymes. When he began playing the tunes back by ear, his parents decided to buy him a 5-octave keyboard and start him on piano lessons. Progress was rapid and he passed Grade 8 piano at the age of nine, with distinction. Alex also learnt to play the organ at Manchester Grammar School but then had a three year break from both education and music before resuming his studies, later going on to read Music at Cambridge, and holding the post of Organ Scholar at Queens College.

TEAMtalk caught up with Alex to ask him some questions:

Q *What music making other than church music are you involved in and what types of music are you interested in?*

A I've been doing a lot of accompanying recently for music exams and concerts and am interested in doing more solo recitals on the piano and organ. I also enjoy singing so would like to get better at that for myself and also to better inform the choir at St Mary Magdalene. I also have another life as a DJ and Music Producer which has always been ticking away in the back of my mind. Recently I played the keys for a showcase of the Blues Brothers at *West End Live* in Trafalgar Square so I'd definitely be up for more of that! Despite being so heavily classical I really enjoy lots of modern music and am currently focusing on DJing and writing house and techno music. However, I can listen (and enjoy!) pretty much anything – classical, dance, jazz, indie – it's all music.

Q *Turning to church music what is it about Anglican music that is so special?*

A I feel a real connection to Anglican music which comes through the raw emotion that composers can imbue into religious music. Anglican music can be fiery and full of passion.



Alex Knight, Director of Music, St Mary Magdalene
Photo: Charles Stiller

At other times it can be soulful and melancholic. When you have a choir that connects with the text and the music it can become magical. I'm a big fan of 20th century choral music and also Renaissance music. Favourites would have to be the *Gloucester Evening Service* by Howells, and the *Morning Collegium Regale* canticles. Duruflé's *Requiem* is also excellent but sometimes you can't beat a bit of plain song!

Q *What makes a good choir?*

A Enthusiastic singers, a willingness to learn and improve amongst the choir technically, interesting music which engages everybody, and an attentive and responsive Director/Conductor. Socialising is also essential and can take a choir to the next level.

Q *What's coming up for music at St Mary Magdalene?*

A We've just launched our Choral Foundation which is the first big step for music at St Mary Magdalene. The Choral Foundation supports four Choral Scholars and an Organ Scholar, and will help improve the current members of the choir whilst broadening our repertoire and giving an opportunity to develop the Scholars' own skills as well. We are also setting up a Junior Choir which is due to begin in September and are looking for children between the ages of 8 and 16 to get involved. It is a relatively low commitment but hugely beneficial to the development of young people musically and socially.

Additionally, a monthly recital series will take place in St Mary Magdalene, where members of the church and beyond can show their musical talents to the people of Richmond.

I would also like to set up a music competition in the near future, as well as some educational ventures that could benefit the community in St Mary Magdalene and Richmond as a whole. The key principle is to enrich people's lives through music, and to build on the current network of friends, regardless of age or background.

The Ormond Poetry Group

Paul Gregorowski

The Poetry Group started in 1993 after a Team Ministry weekend at Wakehurst Place near Battle in Sussex at which I had led a series of poetry workshops. At the end of the final session someone suggested that we continue as a permanent group, but added, 'That's what we always say on these occasions, but it never happens.' Well, it did. Twelve of us met in the Vicarage basement on a Monday evening that September, and here we still are. Nearly 70 people have been part of the group at one time or another during our 24 years.

At present we have 11 regular members, including one who comes from Oxford pretty well every week. We have advertised our existence in various publications in Richmond and beyond, but our membership has seldom risen above 15 at any time. Once people join they tend to remain, and the level of attendance is gratifyingly high. We would love to have more participants and we pride ourselves on our friendliness; we are emphatically not an exclusive group: that is our founding principle. If you do come you will find the very warmest of welcomes. We really do want more members, but poetry seems to be a minority interest.



Poetry Group

Photo: Stewart Kempzell

That is strange, because most people have been moved to express their feelings in words at one time or another, particularly in times of stress. Children are natural poets as is shown by the number of entries to the writing competitions run by Arts Richmond. I have attended many funerals over the years, and at almost all of them poetry, either written specially for the occasion or carefully selected from anthologies or remembered from the past, has played a vital part and has clearly meant a great deal to everyone present.

Not that poetry needs to be funereal. On the contrary, most of it is a celebration of life and love. Our meetings are cheerful affairs where we read and discuss a wide variety of poems by established poets and by ourselves. Not

everyone writes; some prefer to bring a published poem each time. I set a weekly theme which people are free to follow, adapt or ignore altogether if they have a more pressing idea. There is always a generous break for coffee, tea and biscuits in the middle.

Nigel Pearce, our long-distance commuter, has written a tribute to Ruth Lee (see right), a group member since 1997, who died in June. That is the kind of poetry we write (both Ruth's and Nigel's), though we have a wide variety of interests and styles, all equally appreciated. Do pop in one Monday to see if you would like to join. We would love to see you.

Do contact Paul Gregorowski, 020 8948 0017, paulandgillgreg@waitrose.com, first in case we are having a break, and so that I can give you all the details.

For Ruth

*On long summer evenings
enough confidence revived
to tackle the six steps
that would soon defeat her.*

*Postcards united
witticisms with art;
low-key comments hinted
at a hidden depth of knowledge.*

*On a long summer evening
she once upset some yoghurt
in her fridge
and wrote a poem about it.*

The Richmond Sea Cadets were welcomed to St Mary Magdalene for the annual Sea Sunday service, a day on which churches all around the country pray for seafarers, for the challenges they face every day, for their families and to give thanks for their life and work.



After the Sea Sunday service at St Mary's on Sunday 9 July
Photo: Charles Stiller



Caroline Titley, wife of Robert Titley our former Rector, was ordained deacon at Salisbury Cathedral on 1 July and is now a curate at the parish of Wilton with Netherhampton and Fugglestone in Wiltshire. We wish Caroline all the very best for the future.

Caroline Titley receives her ordination licence
Photo: Sue Hart



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TEAMtalk

St Mary Magdalene – Some Literary Associations

Alan Sykes

One of the thoroughly temporary drawbacks of the current building work at St Mary Magdalene is that many of the monuments that adorn its walls are hidden from view – unless, that is, you were to flout health and safety concerns and venture into that forbidden territory where workmen hack, nail, chisel and saw. Heaven forbid that I should suggest such a reckless course of action.

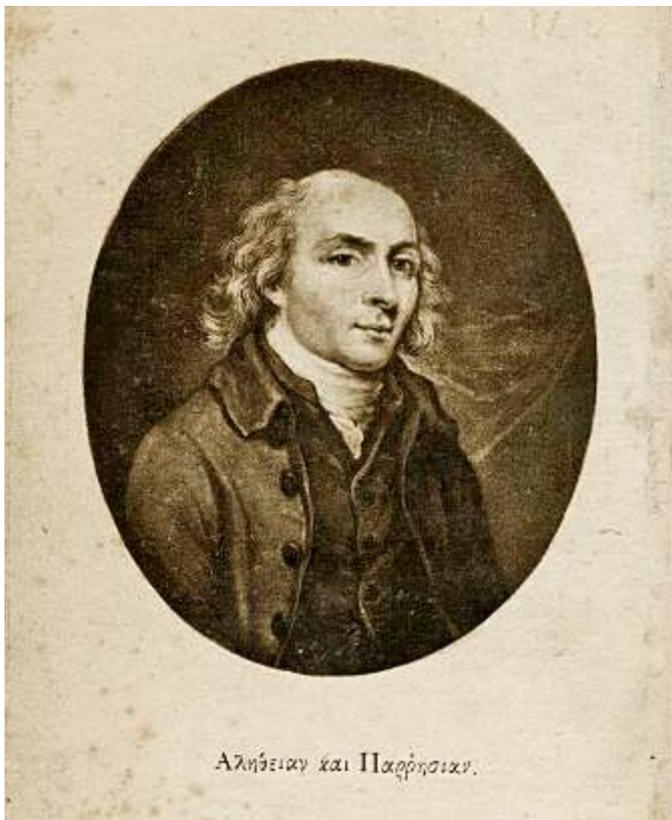
But it does so happen that most of the monuments that commemorate the church's literary connections are congregated in the north aisle which is precisely the site of the current upheaval. Soon enough, no doubt, the refurbished church and all its monuments will be restored to full public view. Be patient.

Let us assume in the meantime, by a supreme effort of the imagination, that the building work is complete. We will take a short tour of the monuments dedicated to notable literary figures, proceeding chronologically by date of their demise.



James Thomson after John Patoun
oil on canvas, feigned oval, 18th century,
based on a work of circa 1746
© National Portrait Gallery, London

Entering by the west door and turning left, we soon come to a brass plaque dedicated to the memory of the poet and dramatist James Thomson, who died in 1748. Though born at Ednam in the Scottish border country (in 1700), Thomson came to London in 1725 and eventually settled in



Gilbert Wakefield by Robert Laurie, after Unknown artist,
mezzotint, published 1792
© National Portrait Gallery, London

Richmond, living in Kew Foot Road for the last 13 years of his life. These days he is most well known for his cycle of poems *The Seasons* (on which Haydn based his oratorio), and as the author of *Rule, Britannia*. He was notoriously indolent. This may be illustrated with a story. The musicologist Charles Burney visited him one day and found him still in bed at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Asked why this was so, Thomson replied: 'I had no motive to rise'. Still, he produced a reasonably substantial body of work and, besides, thought nothing of walking the 9 or 10 miles into London to visit his friends. So idle perhaps, but not absolutely bone idle. Thomson was buried inside the church and the plaque in his memory was erected in 1792.

If we now walk up the north aisle, about halfway along you will find the monument to Gilbert Wakefield, the third son of George Wakefield, who at the time of Gilbert's birth in 1756 was rector of St Nicholas in Nottingham. George subsequently became vicar of Richmond in 1767. Despite his upbringing and

Lady Audley's Secret is a 'sensational' tale of bigamy and attempted murder. Her own life was not without its sensational element – at least by Victorian standards. She lived with, and had children by, the publisher John Maxwell while his first wife was still alive and undivorced. They married when the latter died. The Maxwells (Braddon was the author's maiden name) lived at Lichfield House on the

site of what is now Lichfield Court and Lichfield Gardens.

I cannot resist ending with a well-known line from one of Mrs Braddon's later novels. It could easily have come from *The Importance of Being Ernest*. The heroine's mother says to her daughter: 'It is worse than a crime, Violet, it is an impropriety'.



Messy Church at St Matthias

Revd Anne Crawford

Richmond Team Ministry held its first Messy Church on Saturday 10 June at St Matthias. Young and old came along to celebrate the feast of Pentecost with a lively craft session making windmills, party hats, breeze catchers and decorating special Pentecost cupcakes and icing biscuits. A lively game of blow-football was enjoyed by the boys, and there were puzzles and games to help us explore the theme a little more. We followed the craft session with a simple act of worship using a more experiential approach than we do in traditional



Sunday worship. A scrumptious picnic tea followed, and to end the afternoon we all sang Happy Birthday to the Church, blowing out candles on the cake which never seemed to extinguish no matter how hard we blew! We had lots of exciting things to take home as a reminder not just of how much fun we'd had, but also of how much we had learned about the way the Holy Spirit enlivens the Church and inspires us to be disciples of Jesus.



If you would like to come along and experience Messy Church for yourself you would be very welcome. Our next Messy Church will celebrate Harvest on Saturday 8 October from 4.00-5.30pm.

More information from Rev'd Anne or from Helen Williams (PTO for contact details).



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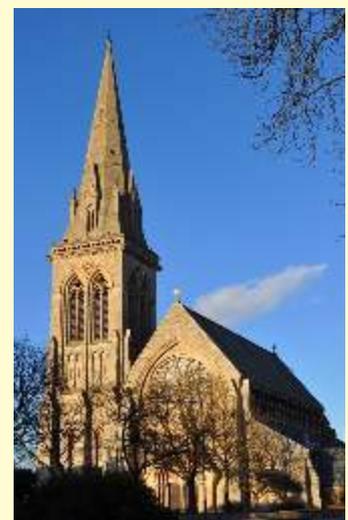
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St John the Divine



St Mary Magdalene



St Matthias

Our Churches