

# ST. MATTHIAS' CHURCH, RICHMOND

## A guide and history

A revised and extended edition to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its consecration, 2008



**ST. MATTHIAS' CHURCH, RICHMOND – A GUIDE AND HISTORY**

**A revised and extended edition to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its consecration,  
researched and written for the Friends of St. Matthias' by Paul Velluet, May, 2008**





**Above: St. Matthias' Church as first designed by George Gilbert Scott, 1857**

**Cover: St. Matthias with works under way, by Llewellyn Petley-Jones, 1978**

## Introduction

This revised and extended guide and history has been published to mark the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of St. Matthias' Church, Richmond, on the 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1858.

St. Matthias' Church is one of the three churches serving the Richmond Team Ministry, formalised in 1995 from the integration of the Parish of St. Mary Magdalene with St. Matthias' and the Parish of St. John the Divine, Richmond, within the Anglican Diocese of Southwark.

The church has been in uninterrupted use for public worship since its consecration in 1858, and in use as a centre for the local community since the completion of extensive works of alteration and improvement in November 1978.

A detailed social history of the church remains to be written, but it is hoped that this brief history and guide will assist visitors and members of the local community to appreciate and enjoy the particular architectural and historic interest church and its features and to value and understand its development over the last one hundred and fifty years; not only as a landmark on the Richmond skyline seen from miles around, but also, as a church and centre meeting the needs of the local community as a place of prayer, worship, celebration, learning and recreation.

## The early years

The development of Richmond and its increasing population during the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; particularly in the lower and northern part of the town, and the consequential pressure on seating accommodation in the historic Parish Church of St. Mary Magdalene, had led to the planning, building and consecration of St. John's Church in September, 1831, on land given by William Selwyn (1775-1855), a distinguished local resident and major estate-owner in Richmond and Kew, as a 'chapel of ease', funded by the Church Building Commissioners, and its assuming the role as the Parish Church of a new and separate parish in 1838.

The further development of the town and the continuing growth in its population; particularly on the hill; resulting from the establishment of a direct railway connection to Richmond from Nine Elms, Battersea (and from 1848, from Waterloo) in July, 1846 and of an extension of the London and South Western Railway to Twickenham, Staines and Windsor from August, 1848, and the consequential and continuing pressure of space in the original Parish Church, led to moves from 1852 onwards to establish a new church to serve the new community on the hill.

However, little happened until May, 1855, when, a public meeting was held at the Boys' National School Room, chaired by Charles Jasper Selwyn (1813-1869, fourth son of William Selwyn and one of the two Churchwardens of the Parish Church, and later Member of Parliament for the University of Cambridge, Solicitor-General in Lord Derby's Government and Lord Justice of Appeal in Chancery) at which it was resolved to respond to the needs of 'the rapidly increasing District on the Hill' by building a new church on the hill and to set up a building committee. Importantly, the meeting resolved that the money necessary to build the church should be raised by voluntary contributions rather than resorting to a church rate. The day after the meeting, the building committee met for the first time and resolved to raise a sum of not less than £7 000 for the project, and recorded that contributions already made or promised amounted to £2 898, including the offer of a site, or £315, by William Selwyn.

Progress was delayed by a breakdown late in 1855 in negotiations between the Building Committee and the Select Vestry (a precursor of the local authority) regarding a grant of part of the Parish Lands in the vicinity of Queen's Road. However, some eighteen months later, in 1857, Charles Jasper Selwyn, QC, resolved the problem by making a reality of his late father's offer of two years before by giving a piece of land in the upper part of a field in Long Down Shot, at the junction of Friars Stile Lane (later Friars Stile Road) and Mount Ararat



Lane (later Mount Ararat Road) at the southern edge of his considerable estate which extended northwards to Kew for the building of a new church on land, conveyed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in July, 1857, 'to be devoted when consecrated to ecclesiastical purposes for ever'.

At the time of its construction, the church was surrounded by mostly open land. Built development in the immediate vicinity was limited to the semi-detached Tudor-Jacobean style villas in Park Road and a terrace of buildings of similar character further along Friars Stile Road. However, even in 1855, the creation and development of Church Road and Kings Road were anticipated, and within the following ten years the greater part of surrounding area was transformed into the characteristic Victorian suburb on the hill with which we are now familiar.

## **The building of the church**

The architect selected to design and realise the construction of the new church was the eminent and prolific Victorian architect, George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878). That such a commission for designing a large, new, Anglican church on a prestigious site should fall to Scott is unsurprising. In the 1850s, Scott was the leading church architect of his generation and an acknowledged leader of the Gothic Revival. Importantly, Scott and his ecclesiastical work would have been well known to Selwyn, his sister Frances Elizabeth (wife of George Peacock, Dean of Ely Cathedral between 1839 and 1858, who worked with Scott on major works of restoration at the cathedral), and his brothers William Selwyn, DD (1806-1875, Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge and Canon of Ely Cathedral) and George Augustus Selwyn (1809-1878, Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and successively Primate of New Zealand and Bishop of Lichfield). In this connection, little more than five years later, Scott was commissioned to design a new chapel on the site of the original 13<sup>th</sup>-century chapel of St. John's College. In addition, he would very probably have been known to the Chairman of the Building Committee, the Revd. Henry Dupuis (1808-1867, first Vicar of Richmond, appointed by the Patrons of the Parish, the Provost and Fellows of King's College, Cambridge, in 1852).

In Scott's original design for the church, the tower and spire were located at the liturgical south-west corner of the church (the right-hand side looking at the front of the church). Indeed, this location was maintained in the signed, eighth-inch scale, contract drawings of 1857 prepared by Scott. For whatever reason, the position of the tower and spire were switched to the liturgical north-west corner of the church (the left-hand side looking at the front of the church). Whether, this decision was attributable to concerns about the foundation conditions, or to townscape factors, remains entirely unclear.

The foundation stone of the new church was laid by Charles Jasper Selwyn on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1857, after a service at the Parish Church in the presence of about two thousand people from the town, and to the accompaniment of the band of the 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Surrey Militia. The first contract for the construction of the greater part of the church was awarded to Messrs. Piper and Sons of Bishopsgate Street, London, EC, and the works completed in just under sixteen months; a significant achievement, for such a scale of project, involving the building of a church with seating accommodation for 921; even in the middle of the nineteenth century. The cost of the entire undertaking, including professional fees to Scott of £462, was £10 073.

The new church was consecrated on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1858, by the Right Reverend Charles Richard Winton, Bishop of Winchester, of which diocese the parish of Richmond was then part.

Describing the service and the new building, *The Illustrated London News* for the 21<sup>st</sup> August noted that 'the new church is advantageously situated on the outskirts of the town and forms a striking object far and near in the landscape'.

As first completed, the north-west tower only rose to the level of the base of the nave roof and was covered temporarily by a shallow, pitched roof. However, in June, 1861, the Vicar, as Chairman of the Building

Committee, appealed to the people of Richmond for donations to meet the cost of completing the upper stage of the tower and the spire:

‘An ecclesiastical edifice of such strength and excellence, is necessarily costly; but it has been the opinion of the Committee, from the first, that the importance of the locality and the singular beauty of the site, justified them in adopting a design, which would not only confer upon the inhabitants the lasting benefit of additional church accommodation, so urgently called for, but which would be the pride and ornament of Richmond for many generations’.

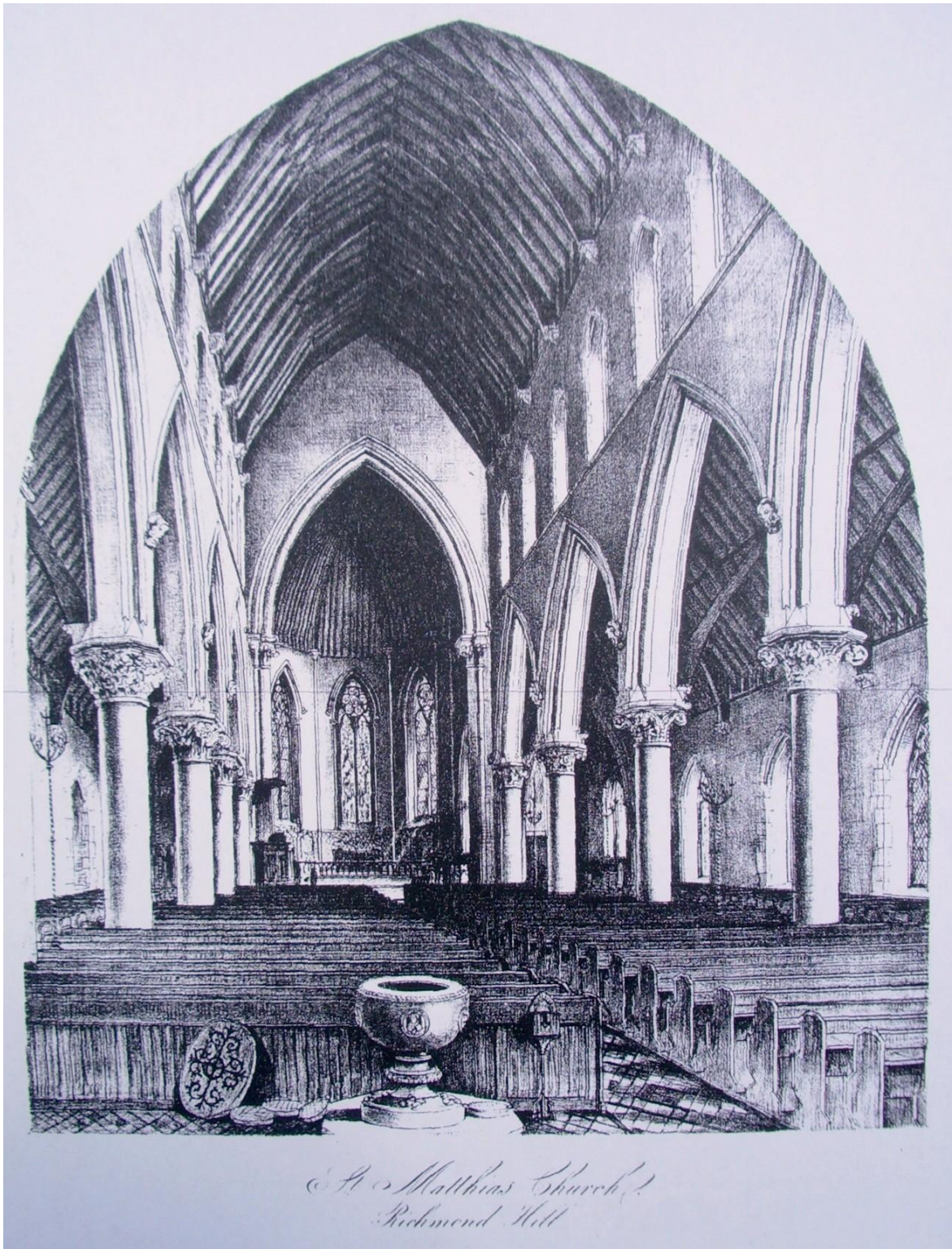
Whilst still appealing for additional funds, the contract for the construction of the upper part of the tower was signed with Messrs. James Long in the sum of £2 129 on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 1861. By October, it was reported that the tower was ‘quickly rising’ and suggested that once completed it would be ‘the chief ornament of Richmond,’ and that ‘since the destruction of Henry VII’s Palace, no building has been seen in Richmond to compare with this’.

Almost a year later, whilst still appealing for additional funds, the contract for the construction of the spire was signed with the same contractor in the sum of £1 038 on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1862. The entire works were completed by the late summer of 1862 at a cost of £3 726 including professional fees to Scott of £175.

On Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> August, accompanied by ten important guests in addition to the workmen and the Clerk of Works on the lofty scaffolding platform at the very top of the spire, the Vicar and Chairman of the Building Committee, the Revd. Henry Dupuis, laid the capstone of the spire. Thereupon, the Royal Standard was raised and a salute of twenty-one guns fired.

## **The completed church**

The exterior of the church remains very much as designed and built between 1857 and 1862. Indeed, in part, the church remains incomplete, as the stonework capitals to the clerestory window arcades along each side of the nave remain as simple blocks rather than being carved as decorative features. By contrast, the interior of the church has been altered, improved and enhanced substantially over the last one hundred and fifty years.



The interior of St. Matthias' Church, ca. 1861, showing the open timber roofs, boarded-in in 1908-1909 and 1914-15; the font, base and cover, removed from the church in 1962; and the pews, removed and re-used as panelling in 1977-1978

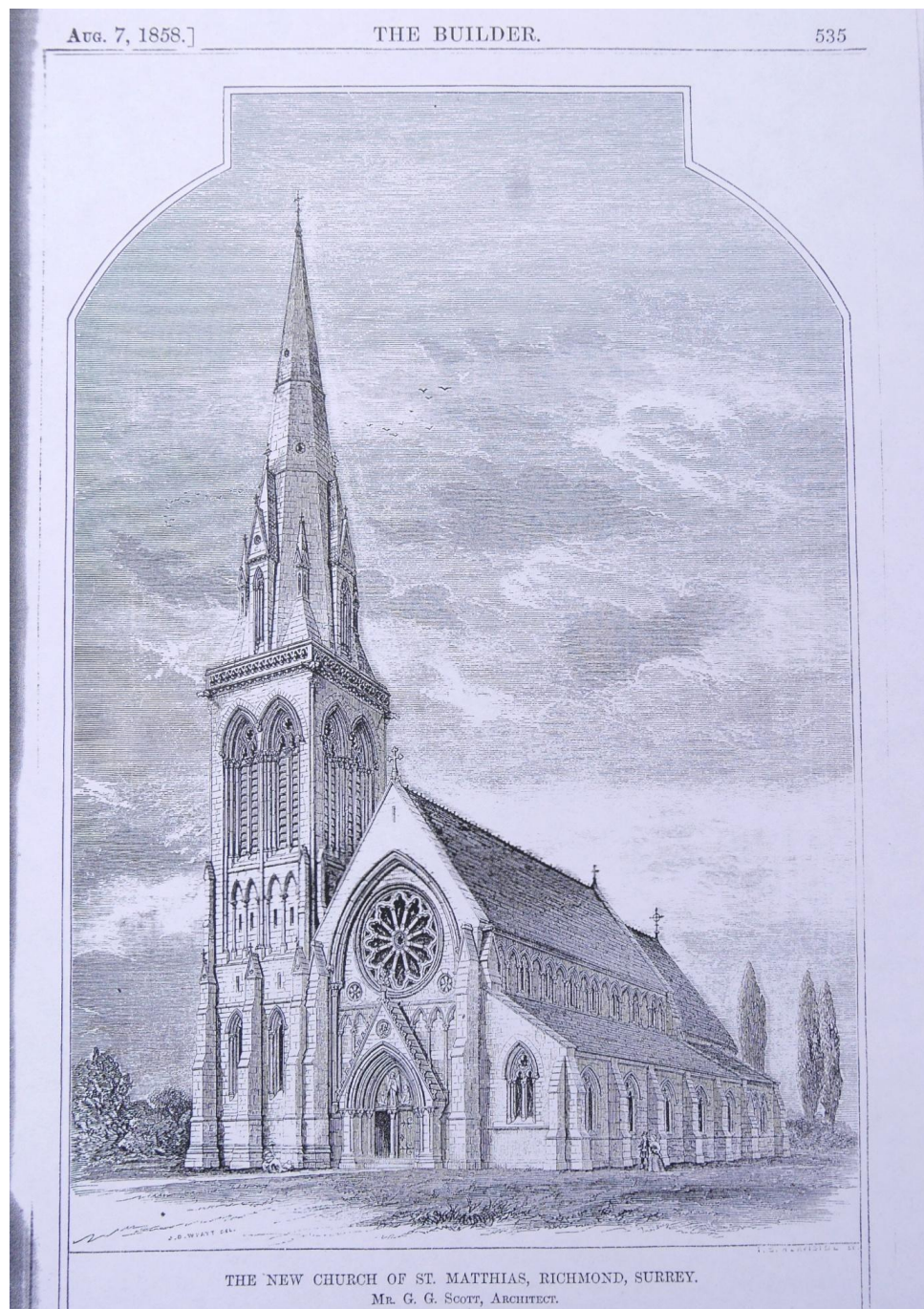
In the relevant volume of *The Buildings of England (London 2: South*, Penguin Books, 1983) the authors, Nikolaus Pevsner and Bridget Cherry describe St. Matthias' as 'the grandest church in Richmond'.



Despite the considerable changes in the adjacent area both physically and socially over the last one hundred and fifty years, the church maintains a key architectural and townscape role at the heart of the *St. Matthias' Conservation Area*, and plays a major role in the life of the community.

### **The architecture of the church as designed by Scott and as first built**

In its planning and detailed design, Scott's new church at Richmond conformed to the generally adopted principles of mainstream Anglican church architecture and ordering in the middle years of the nineteenth century; informed substantially by the ecclesiological ideals espoused by the Cambridge Camden Society and by the severe qualities of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century English and French Gothic traditions favoured by the leading exponents of the Gothic Revival in the 1850s.



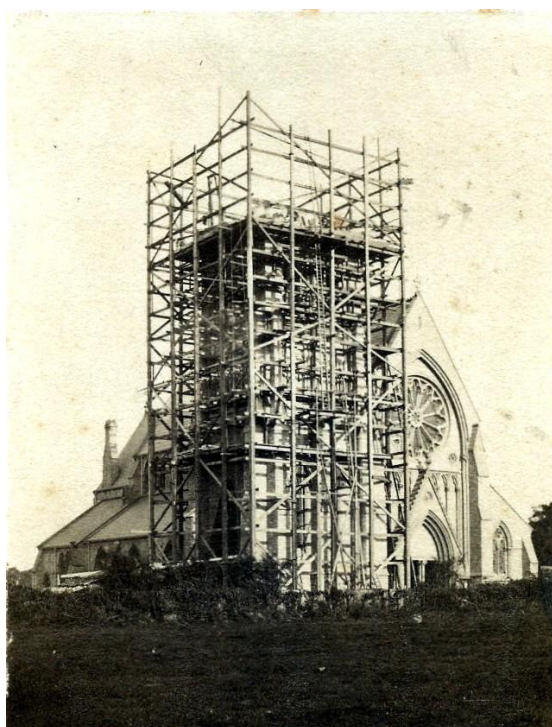
In its issue of the 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1858, *The Builder* provided an appreciative review of the new church suggesting that 'the style adopted in the new church is geometrical pointed, but is by no means lavish in ornament, for, with the exception of the west front, the effect of the design depends upon the boldness of its parts'. Writing soon after the completion of the new church in 1858, the authors of the review of new churches in volume XIX of *The Ecclesiologist* were rather more critical:

'A new church, by Mr. G.G. Scott, in his characteristic style: bold and artistic in its treatment, but withal rather cold... There is great internal height, and much dignity of form... In the corbel-heads there is almost too much carving. We confess that we grow rather tired of those everlasting mitred and crowned heads – in neither of which is there much reality or appropriateness – and even of excessive floral ornamentation. A little real Christian sculpture in the reredos, or in the tympana of doors, or anywhere else, in which the higher powers of our rising artists might be employed, would be far more to our mind; and we feel that we have some right to expect it in the works of one who has argued so ably for an improvement in that branch of art as has Mr. Scott...

The internal arrangements are commodious, but show no great improvement of ritual. The chancel levels are not bad, but there is no screen or parclose, and the altar stands close to the eastern wall of the apse. There is no reredos whatever as yet, and this unhappily is the very barest part of a somewhat chilling interior. Two chairs flank an unadorned altar. There is no attempt at colour in any part, except in two or three windows...

Upon the whole this church is a convincing proof of the immense stride lately made among us in reviving a good style of *Pointed* design. But we want something more than coldly correct architecture – something that shall show convincingly that each particular design has been with its author not merely a routine example of office work, but a true labour of love.'

In the design of the liturgical west elevation (including, most importantly, the wheel window), the apse at the liturgical east end, and the nave arcades internally, Scott drew explicit influence from Northern French Gothic sources of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.







**Photograph of the clock mechanism in the tower. Added by The Friends of St Matthias from archive material, April 2025. The Friend's funded repairs to the clock mechanism in 2019.**

The distinctive design of the lower part of the tower with its three, boldly expressed, projecting, rectangular piers clearly reflect the design of the lower part of the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, south-west tower of the cathedral at Chartres, whilst the general profile and proportions of the spire which rises to a height of 194 feet (approximately 20 metres) above ground level, reflect those of the early 13<sup>th</sup> century spires on the west towers of the cathedral at Bayeux. The great wheel window at the front of the church and the strongly expressed portal below, with its beautifully carved tympanum (added in 1911), are clearly and closely based on 13<sup>th</sup> century precedents in diverse Northern French cathedrals and churches. Paradoxically, other parts of the church draw their inspiration from more distinctly English sources. In the relevant *Buildings of England* volume, Pevsner and Cherry suggest that the arcading of the clerestory with its lancet windows is similar to that found at All Saints' Church, Stamford, and other Lincolnshire churches.

The exterior of the church is faced in squared Kentish Ragstone rubble; with a London Stock brickwork core to the tower and some other parts of the building; with dressings, features and carved work, and the structure of the cone of the pinnacled and parapeted broach spire, carried out in Bath Stone from the Box Hill quarry. Originally roofed in Bangor Slate in graded courses, most of the roof slopes are now covered in Westmoreland Slate.

As designed and built, the proportions and general design of the interior were of essentially French 13<sup>th</sup>-century character. However, over the years, the alterations and additions have introduced more, distinctly late English Gothic features, particularly those effected in the first thirty years of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century under the direction of Cecil Hare (originally of the distinguished architectural practice of Bodley and Hare) and local architect, Oswald Pearce (1887-1973).

The major works of alteration to the interior of church carried work in 1977-1978 under the direction of architects, Hutchison, Locke and Monk, took a very different and distinctly more contemporary architectural approach, but were reconciled to their context by the very successful re-use of the displaced panelled backs of the pitch-pine pews that one filled the entire church as a lining to the new internal spaces and sliding screens. More recent changes in the flooring, lighting and furnishing of the building have shown a very much more responsive approach to the original mid-Victorian character of the building.

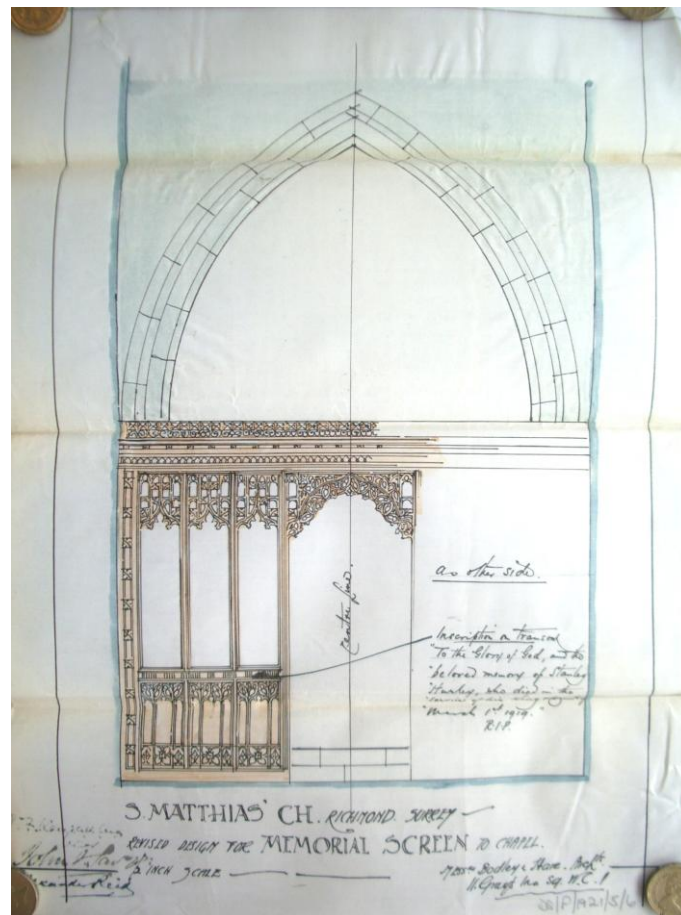
### **External changes over the years**

The principal changes to the exterior of the building as designed by Scott and first built are modest in scale and comprise:

- The removal of the original, diamond-shaped, plain, leaded glazing and external ferramenta from most of the windows and the substitution of stained glass and saddle-bars from the 1850s onwards;
- The addition of a porch designed in Scott's office at the liturgical south-west corner of the church on the Kings Road frontage in 1869;
- The addition of three, skeletal, ironwork clock-faces set in the tower at high level serving the clock by Thwaites and Reed installed in 1871 as an additional memorial to the Revd. Henry Dupuis (and still wound by hand each week);
- The addition of a choir vestry in 1884, designed by John Oldrid Scott (1841-1913, Scott's second son and successor to his practice) and built by Frederick Sims for £748 (excluding the architect's fee of £36) on the liturgical north side of the church on the Church Road frontage;
- The installation of a carved stone tympanum over the liturgical west doors in 1911;
- The addition in 1915 of a single-storey clergy vestry, designed by Cecil Hare, at the liturgical north-west corner of the church;
- The alteration and extension in 1915 of the original south chancel aisle to form the All Saints' Chapel, designed by Cecil Hare;
- Modest adjustments in the profiles of the Westmoreland Slated roof slopes to the aisles incorporating natural ventilators effected as part of the major works of alteration to the interior of the building effected in 1977-1978; and
- Major changes to the alignment and height of the stonework boundary walls and gates at the liturgical west end of the building and related landscaping works designed by Hutchison, Locke and Monk, effected in 1979.

In addition, major works of repair and restoration have been undertaken over the years. These include substantial works for the repair of the liturgical east end of the All Saints' Chapel carried out in 1958 to remedy significant bomb damage to the church suffered in 1944 and the complete re-glazing of the clerestory windows, under the direction of Oswald Pearce; works to the stonework of the spire in the early 1960s; and substantial works for the repair and replacement of stonework on the tower under the direction of the Parish Architect, Peter Bowyer, in 1988-1989, funded by the Parish, The Friends of St. Matthias' and a public appeal led by Sir David Attenborough, a local resident.





## Architectural additions and memorials during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (edit added by The Friends of St Matthias, April 2025)

### The interior of the church today

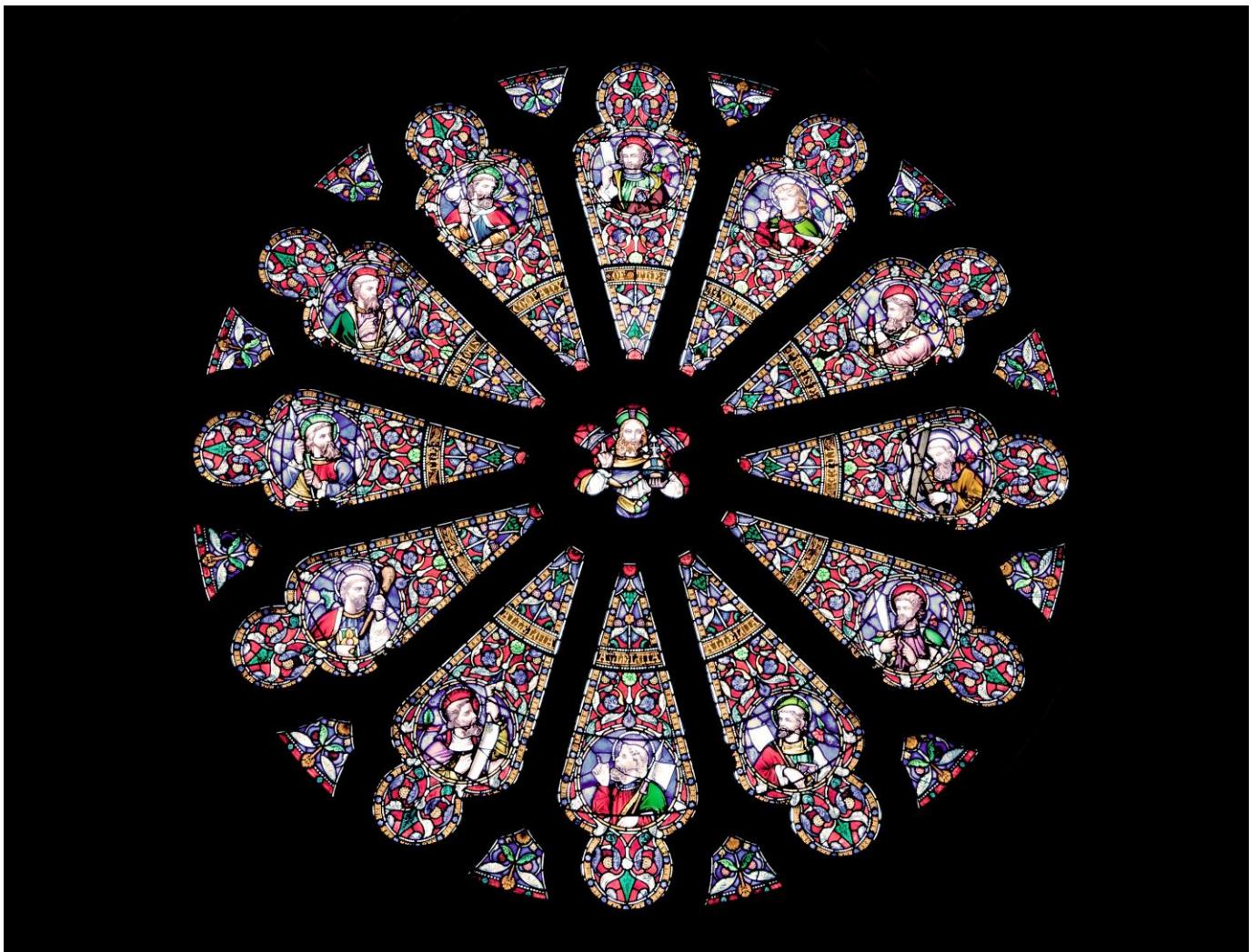
As first completed, the interior of the church was austere, with plain plastered walls, minimal furnishing other than regularly spaced, pitch-pine pews accommodating over nine hundred worshippers, and plain-glazed windows. However, thankfully, over the last one hundred and fifty years, the serious deficiencies in the character of the interior of the church noted in *The Ecclesiologist* have been positively addressed and the church transformed with considerable care, skill and imagination.

Importantly, for all the extensive changes to the interior of the church over the last thirty years, the generous scale and proportions of Scott's original church of 1857-1858 have been substantially retained. The lofty gothic arches carried on richly carved capitals supported on smooth, circular-sectioned columns at 15 feet (4.5 metres) centres still provide the interior with its distinctiveness and coherence. Close by, the many mitred and crowned heads carved by Thomas Farmer still gaze down from the bases of the label mouldings above each arch.

Significantly, it was John Oldrid Scott, who succeeded his father as the Surveyor to the church in 1878, who first recommended major improvements to the interior of the church. In a report to the Vicar and Churchwardens on his survey of the condition of the church in 1886, Scott added recommendations for various improvements to the interior of the church. These included the introduction of a richly coloured and gilded reredos to the altar; the introduction of an open screen between the chancel and the nave and screens

in the arches to either side of the chancel; the repaving of the chancel and sanctuary; the lining of the roof of the chancel; the replacement of the original pitch-pine choir stalls with new stalls in oak; the introduction of oak sedilia and a credence table in the sanctuary; the introduction of oak panelling to the walls of the apse; the introduction of a new pulpit in stone; and the installation of ironwork gates to the porch at the liturgical south-west corner of the building. However, it was left to his successors Arthur Blomfield and Cecil Hare, to realise such measures in later years.

Within the building, the areas of greatest architectural and ecclesiological interest are the chancel and sanctuary and the All Saints' Chapel. Both comprise extensive works carried out in 1908-1909 and 1915-1916 under the direction of the relatively modestly known but very distinguished church architect Cecil Hare (former partner of the very much better known George Frederick Bodley (1827-1907, the distinguished Gothic Revival architect of the middle and later years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who trained with Scott and who was the architect of the major works of extension and alteration to the Parish Church in the heart of the Town, carried out in 1904), and works for the completion of the improvements to the chancel and sanctuary, designed by Oswald Pearce and carried out in 1934.



**Rose Window image (internal) - one of a series of photographs professionally commissioned by the Friends in the late 2010's. (added here by The Friends of St Matthias, April 2025)**



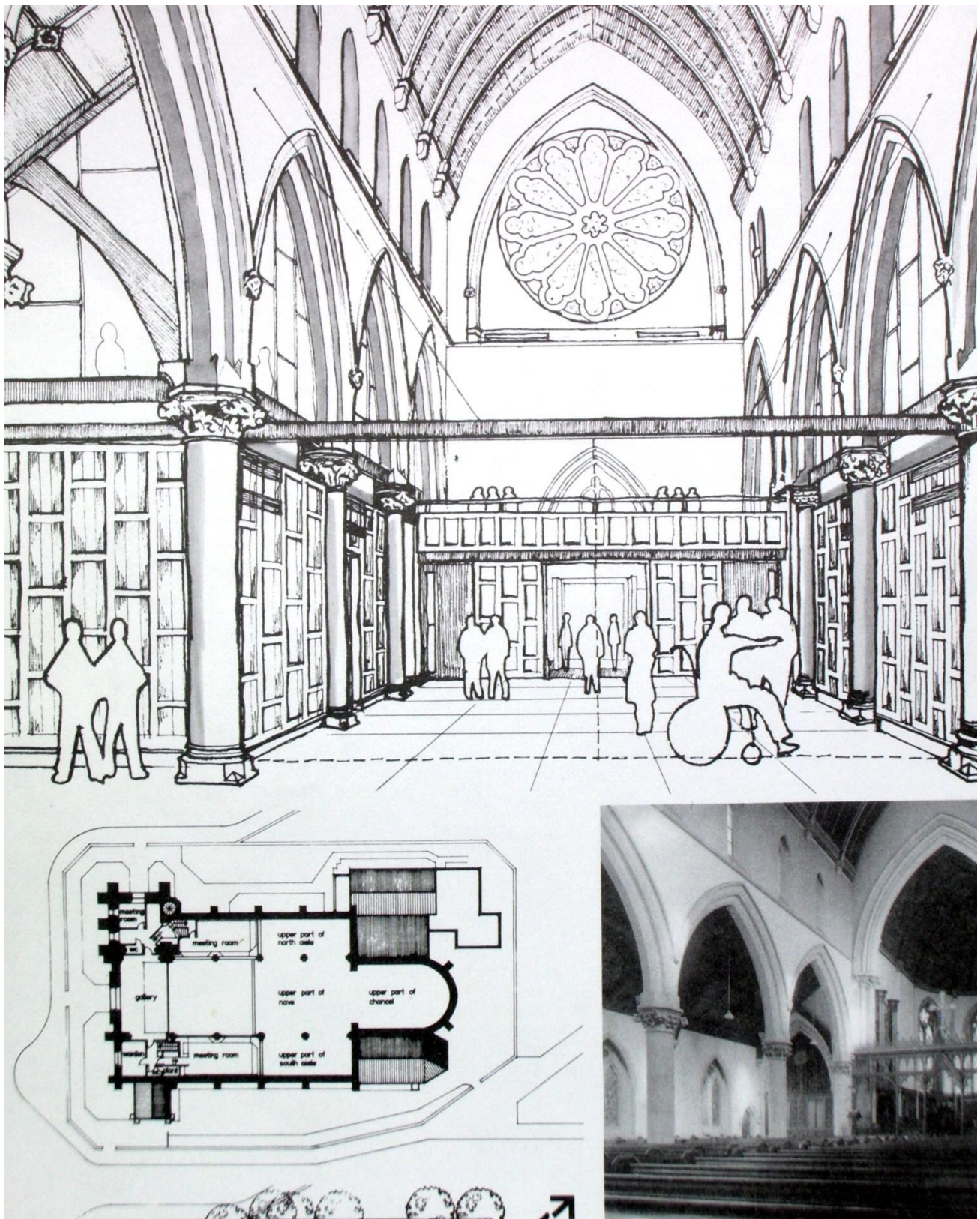
## **Major works of enhancement and the creation of the community centre**

From the early 1960s there had been increasing discussion within the Parish of how St. Matthias' Church could better respond to the needs of both the church and local communities on the Hill. A modest scheme for the creation of a series of enclosed spaces at the liturgical west end of the church designed by Oswald Pearce, known colloquially as the Japanese Temple, had been constructed in 1962 but never fully completed. In 1971, under the leadership of the then new Vicar, the Revd. Canon John Oates (Vicar, 1970-1984), the Parochial Church Council (P.C.C.) resolved to establish a commission to explore how the pastoral and community needs of those living and working on the hill could be better met by the church. In 1975, further to completion of a preliminary study by Tom Manning and Paul Velluet, the P.C.C. led by Canon Oates commissioned architects Hutchison Locke Monk to examine the feasibility of adapting St. Matthias' Church to provide a wide range of social, welfare, and recreational facilities to serve the existing community on the Hill and the then rapidly growing new community on the Queens Road Estate whilst maintaining its primary function as a place of Christian worship.

Resulting from the completion and publication of the *St. Matthias' Feasibility Study* in October 1975, and further studies into potential running costs undertaken early in 1976, the Trustees of the Richmond Parish Charity Lands agreed to contribute 90% of the costs of the works for the adaptation of the building subject to the Parish finding the remainder. Further to extensive consultation and discussion, a detailed brief was developed, definitive proposals drawn up and approvals and funding secured.

Major works for the realisation of the project were commenced in May 1977, under the direction of Hutchison, Locke and Monk, and completed in November 1978; during which time the congregation continued to worship in the chancel and choir vestry of the church. The completed scheme comprised the removal of all the pews from the nave and aisles and the laying of a uniform and level floor, the construction of self-contained rooms and spaces at two levels around three sides of the liturgical west end of the building, including a kitchen and lavatories, the complete re-lighting of the nave and aisles, the provision of a new dais and altar at the liturgical east end of the nave, and the provision of new seating.

Since 1978, further works of improvement to the interior of the church have been undertaken under the direction of the Parish Architect, Peter Bowyer, including the introduction of significantly enhanced lighting, the redecoration of the nave, chancel and aisles, the re-paving of the nave and aisles, and the re-ordering of the area around the nave altar, completed in 2009.

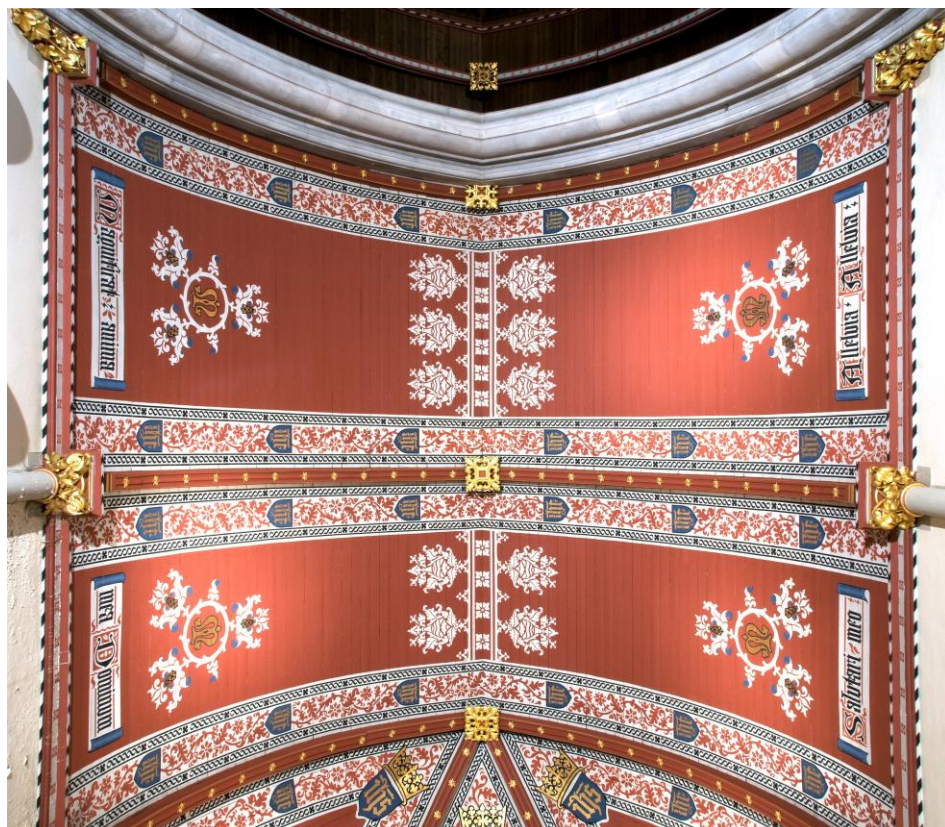


**Drawings by architects Hutchison, Locke and Monk, showing the scheme of major alterations carried out in 1977-1978 to facilitate broader use of St. Matthias' Church by the local community**



## The ceilings and paved floors

The richly decorated painted ceilings of the chancel and sanctuary and of the All Saints' Chapel are important and attractive features of the interior of the church.



Chancel ceiling images added by The Friends of St Matthias, April 2025)

The original open timber roofs of the chancel, nave and aisles and All Saints' Chapel shown in early illustrations of the interior of the church, were lost from view in 1908-1909 and 1914-1915 respectively, when the present deal-boarded linings were introduced, painted and decorated, or stained to match oak, under the direction of Cecil Hare, to overcome the problems of falling plaster and to keep the interior warmer and better ventilated.

The painted, decorated and gilded boarded ceiling above the chancel and sanctuary was added in 1908-1909 as an integral part of the extensive works of enhancement of the chancel and sanctuary carried out under the direction of Cecil Hare to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of the church. The opening words of the *Magnificat* in Latin are carried around the ceiling in a continuous inscription. Due to the deteriorating condition of the original paintwork and the fading of the once rich colours, the entire ceiling was stabilised, repainted to match the original scheme of 1908, and gilding added, in a scheme carried out in 1992 under the direction of Peter Bowyer, funded by the Parish and The Friends of St. Matthias'.

The original, boarded lining of the nave and aisles added in 1914-1915 had very limited colouring; the mid-oak stain of the deal boarding being relieved only by the use of vermilion in the chamfers and hollows of the mouldings and the gilding of the bosses in the aisles. However, the nave ceiling was given added colours in the redecoration of the interior in 1958 to mark the centenary of the church.

In the All Saints' Chapel, Cecil Hare provided a very beautiful the intricately painted, decorated and gilded boarded ceiling to the polygonal apse that contains the sanctuary, which remains unchanged to the present. Close by, Oswald Pearce provided a painted and decorated ply-boarded ceiling on the underside of the roof of the original south chancel aisle in 1935.

As first built, except of the raised timber platforms on which the pitch-pine pews in the nave, aisles and chancel aisles were located, the floors were paved in black and red quarry tiles made by Messrs. Minton and Company. The paving and steps in the chancel and sanctuary was replaced in green *Tinos* marble and white *Pentelikon* marble as an integral part of the extensive works of enhancement of the chancel and sanctuary carried out in 1908 under the direction of Cecil Hare. A few years later, the greater part of the paving and the steps in the former liturgical south chancel aisle were replaced in black and white marble, laid to a chequer pattern (in the tradition of Bodley) as an integral part of the adaptation and extension of the space to serve as the All Saints' Chapel, carried out in 1915 under the direction of Cecil Hare.

## **The altars**

Whilst the principal liturgical focus of the church today is the free-standing altar at the centre of the nave provided in 1978, the beautiful, carved and gilded oak, 'high' altar located at the liturgical east end of the chancel and sanctuary, designed by Cecil Hare and added in 1908-1909 as part of the extensive works of enhancement of the chancel and sanctuary undertaken to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of the church, which is understood to incorporate part of the original altar, retains a significant liturgical and architectural place in the church.

It was not until 1915, that a second altar was added in the church as an integral part of the new All Saints' Chapel, designed by Cecil Hare and created out of the original south chancel aisle. The original, carved oak retable to the altar was restored to the chapel in 1984 under the direction of Paul Velluet.



## **The open oak screens**

The chancel of the church is separated from the nave by a generously proportioned open, oak screen designed by the prolific Victorian church architect, Arthur Blomfield (1829-1899, who was also the Choir Master at the church in the 1860s) added to the church in 1897.

In his original design, Blomfield had proposed that the central opening in the screen should contain low, ironwork gates, and that the beam above should carry the figures of Our Lord on the Cross with the Blessed Virgin Mary on one side and St. John on the other, carved in oak. Sadly, however, the Diocesan Court declined to grant a faculty for the proposals for legal reasons, and the work was completed with only a simple, decorated cross, without the figures of Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John, but with the discrete provision for the possible fixing of ironwork gates at some future stage; never realised.

The lower, open oak screen across the arched opening between the All Saints' Chapel and the liturgical south aisle was added in 1915, as an integral part of the overall scheme for the creation of the chapel designed by Cecil Hare. Unlike Blomfield, Hare looked to late English Gothic precedents for the detailed design of his screen and it thus looks very much like a screen that could have been made in late mediaeval times.

A further screen, added in 1916, fills the corresponding opening at the liturgical east end of the liturgical north aisle, but unlike the two other screens, it is constructed in decorative wrought-ironwork. Behind the screen is the organ and below, a large oak-faced cupboard for vestments. It takes the place of a display of organ pipes set above a panelled pitch pine screen.

## **The furnishings in the chancel and sanctuary**

As noted above, the enhancement of the chancel and sanctuary with oak panelling, choir stalls and other furnishings was first recommended by John Oldrid Scott in 1886.

However, other than the addition of the oak chancel screen in 1897, the first stage in the realisation of Scott's recommendations was not realised until the major scheme of enhancement carried out in 1908-1909 under the direction of Cecil Hare, when the very fine, carved and gilded oak altar and retable were added, together with the carved oak communion rails and carved oak door leading to the vestry (by Laurence Turner), the Austrian Oak panelling to each side of the altar and the open, oak screen to the All Saints Chapel.

In 1934, the scheme was completed by the removal of the original pitch-pine choir stalls and desks (subsequently relocated to Holy Trinity Church, Castlenau, Barnes) and their replacement with beautifully carved oak choir stalls and desks designed by Oswald Pearce. Interestingly, Scott's original clergy seats remain. At the same time, Pearce removed the hangings behind and to each side of the altar, added in Hare's scheme of 1908-1909, raised the carved and gilded retable to the same level as the adjacent oak panelling, concealing from view for all time the original painted decoration added to the lower walls of the chancel and sanctuary in the 1860s.

## **The font**

Very sadly, the original, generously proportioned, stone font (and its base and cover), located at the liturgical west end of the church, were removed and disposed of in 1962 as part of the works for the creation of a new multi-purpose room (subsequently removed) and replaced by a modestly scaled movable font in oak (with matching candlesticks) designed by Pearce and made by J.R. Kinsey substituted.

## **The pulpit**

The present, finely carved oak pulpit and canopy located on a stone plinth on the liturgical south side of the chancel arch date from 1916-1917 and was designed by Cecil Hare. It was rebuilt due to a failing foundation in 1995. The pulpit carries the carved figures of St. Matthias and St. Paul.

The original and very much plainer pulpit was originally located in a similar position on the liturgical north side of the chancel. In 1891-1892, it was moved towards the liturgical west end of the church and fixed against the easternmost column of the liturgical north arcade, as part of the scheme of works which also involved the formation of the present doorway at the liturgical east end of the liturgical north aisle, leading to the choir vestry, the building of the entrance lobby to the choir vestry and the removal of the first two rows of pews across the full width of the church.

## **The stained-glass windows**

The stained glass of the great wheel window, high up at the liturgical west end of the nave, the three fine windows in the apse at the liturgical east end of the church, and the series of windows in the All Saints' Chapel are important and attractive features of the interior of the church.

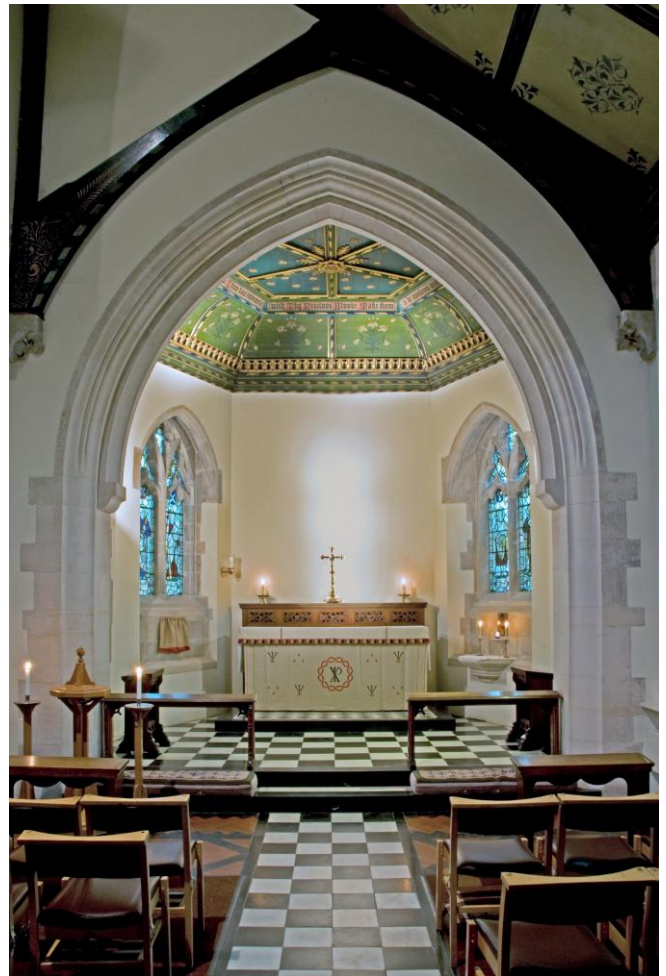
Soon after its consecration in August 1858 and for the following twenty years, the original, diamond-shaped, plain, leaded glazing and external ferramenta of the windows along the liturgical south and north aisles and the chancel aisles were removed and replaced with stained glass donated in memory of past members of the congregation and family members. These windows include work by the well known Victorian stained glass designers and makers as Lavers, Westlake and Barraud, John Hardman and Company of Birmingham and William Wailes of Newcastle upon Tyne.

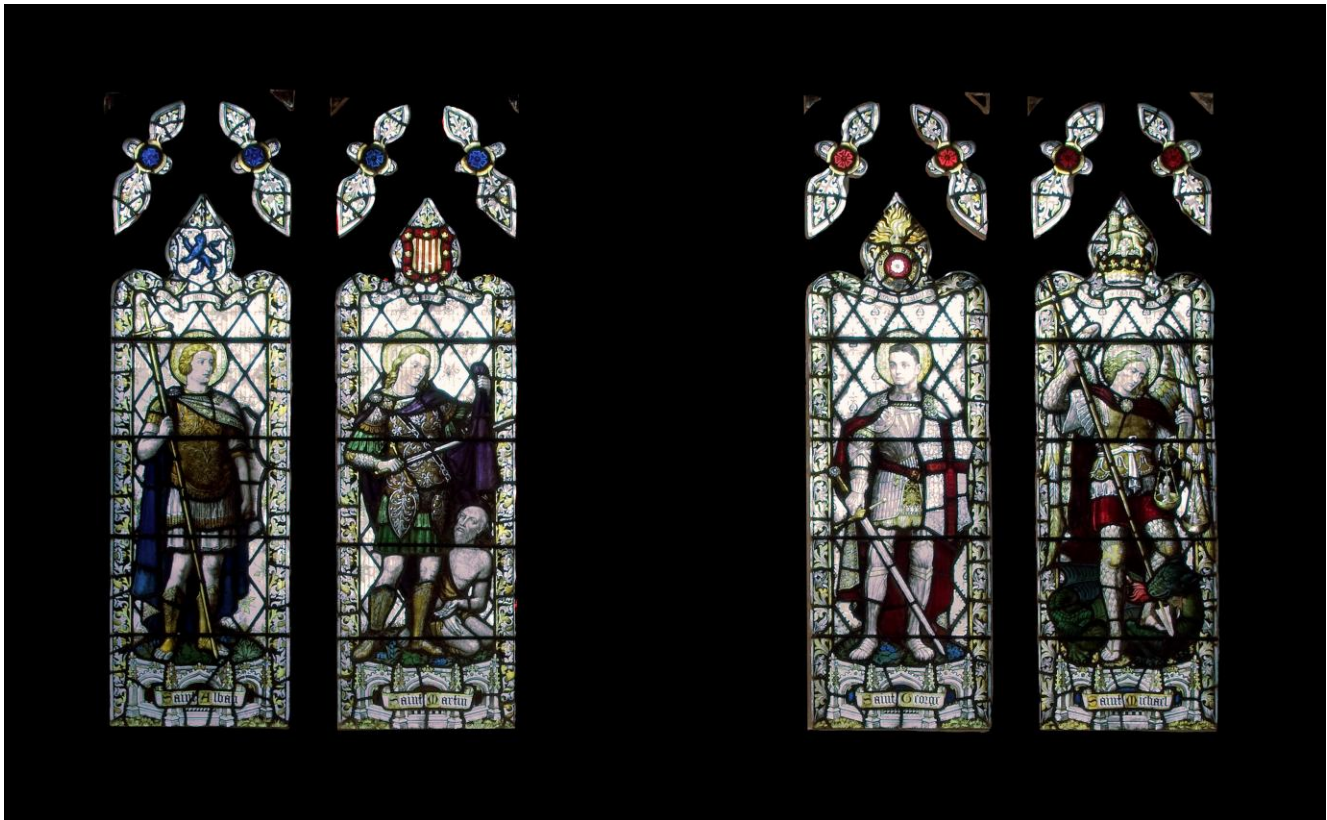
The three large windows in the apse at the liturgical east end of the church were filled with stained glass depicting scenes from the life of Our Lord (with smaller scenes from the Old Testament, below) between 1861 and 1862 designed and made by William Wailes (who added a further window in 1864, now lost, at the east end of the original chancel aisle on the liturgical south side of the church),

However, the window of greatest significance is clearly that at high level at the liturgical west end of the church where the distinctive traceried lights of the wheel window were filled with richly coloured stained glass designed and made by William Wailes in 1868 as a memorial to the first Vicar of Richmond, the Revd. Henry Dupuis, at a cost of £210. The window depicts the faces and symbols of the Apostles in each of the twelve compartments and the face of Our Lord in the roundel at the centre, and incorporates the inscriptions 'THE GLORIOUS COMPANY OF THE APOSTLES PRAISE THEE' and 'ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA'.

In its style and subtle colouring, the stained glass in the series of windows in the All Saints' Chapel installed in 1915-1916 is in marked contrast to the glass in the wheel window. The windows in the polygonal apse of the chapel depict Saints Peter and Andrew (to the left of the altar) and Saints Nicholas and Luke (to the right of the altar), together with the symbols of the Royal Navy and Medicine above to reflect the associations of those in whose memory the windows were given. The two pairs of windows at high level on the liturgical south side of the chapel depict Saints Alban and Martin, and Saints George and Michael, and were given in memory of Second Lieutenant Basil Umney of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, killed in the Battle of the Somme on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1916 aged nineteen. Of particular significance is the face of St. George which, unlike the conventional saints' faces in the other windows, reproduces a photograph of the face of the young Basil Umney.







**Stained glass images and of the All Saint's chapel, added by Friends of St Matthias (April 2025)**

## **The Great War Memorial**

The memorial of those men of the Parish who died in action in the Great War of 1914-1918 is located at high level on the wall of the liturgical north aisle. Originally located further westwards, it was relocated to its present position as an integral part of the major scheme of works carried out in 1977-1978.

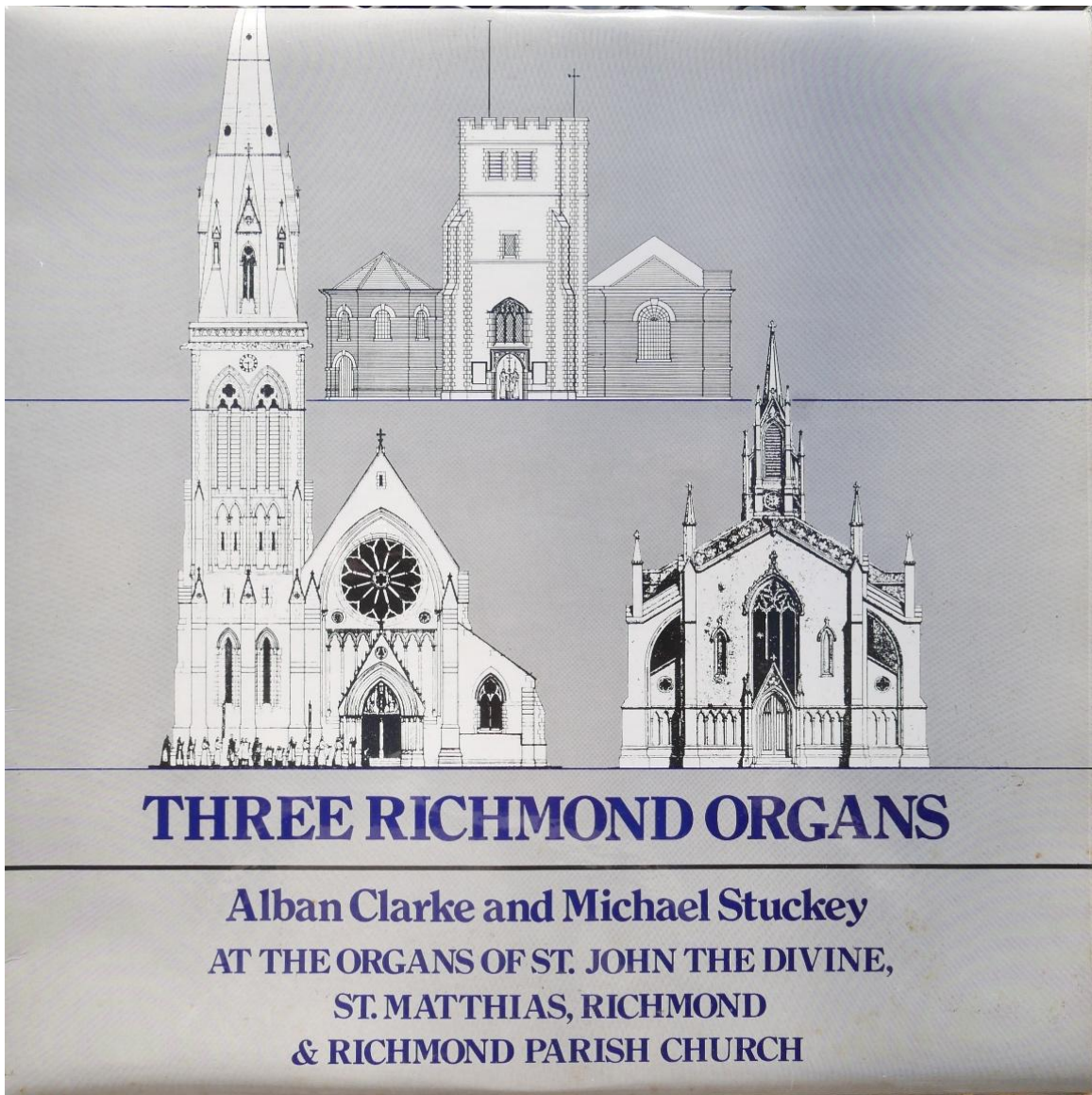
## **The Organ**

As first completed and consecrated, the church possessed no organ; relying instead on a modest harmonium located in the south chancel aisle; soon replaced, it is understood, by a small, one-manual organ built by Messrs. Henry Jones and Son of Fulham.

Late in November 1862, a new, two manual organ built by Messrs. J.W. Walker and Son and located in the north chancel aisle, was completed and brought into use with a grand service at which the church's own choir was augmented by the gentlemen of the choirs of Westminster Abbey, the Chapel Royal and the Temple Church, and the organ played by Mr. Coward, the organist of Lambeth Parish Church and the Crystal Palace. At a later service on the same day, the church's choir under Arthur Blomfield's direction was augmented by the members of Blomfield's office choir then including the young Thomas Hardy, who had joined the office at 8, St. Martin's Place, W.C., as an architectural assistant in May of that year.

The organ was enlarged with additional stops and a third manual in 1869 by Messrs. Gray and Davidson, and again, in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with further stops and a fourth manual by Messrs. Hill and Son. In 1899, the organ was provided with a fine, oak, organ-case, facing-in to the chancel, designed by Arthur Blomfield, of very similar character and detailed design to Blomfield's very much larger organ-case for Southwark Cathedral.





**From Paul Velluet's archives – added by FoSM, April 2025**

In 1911, the Walker organ was completely rebuilt as a very much larger, three-manual instrument by Messrs. Lewis and Co. (subsequently taken over by Messrs. Henry Willis and Son) and subsequently rebuilt by Willis's in 1931. Further works and additions were undertaken by Willis's in 1962, 1965 and 1969. Willis's maintained the organ until it was taken out of service in 1990 due to major technical problems.

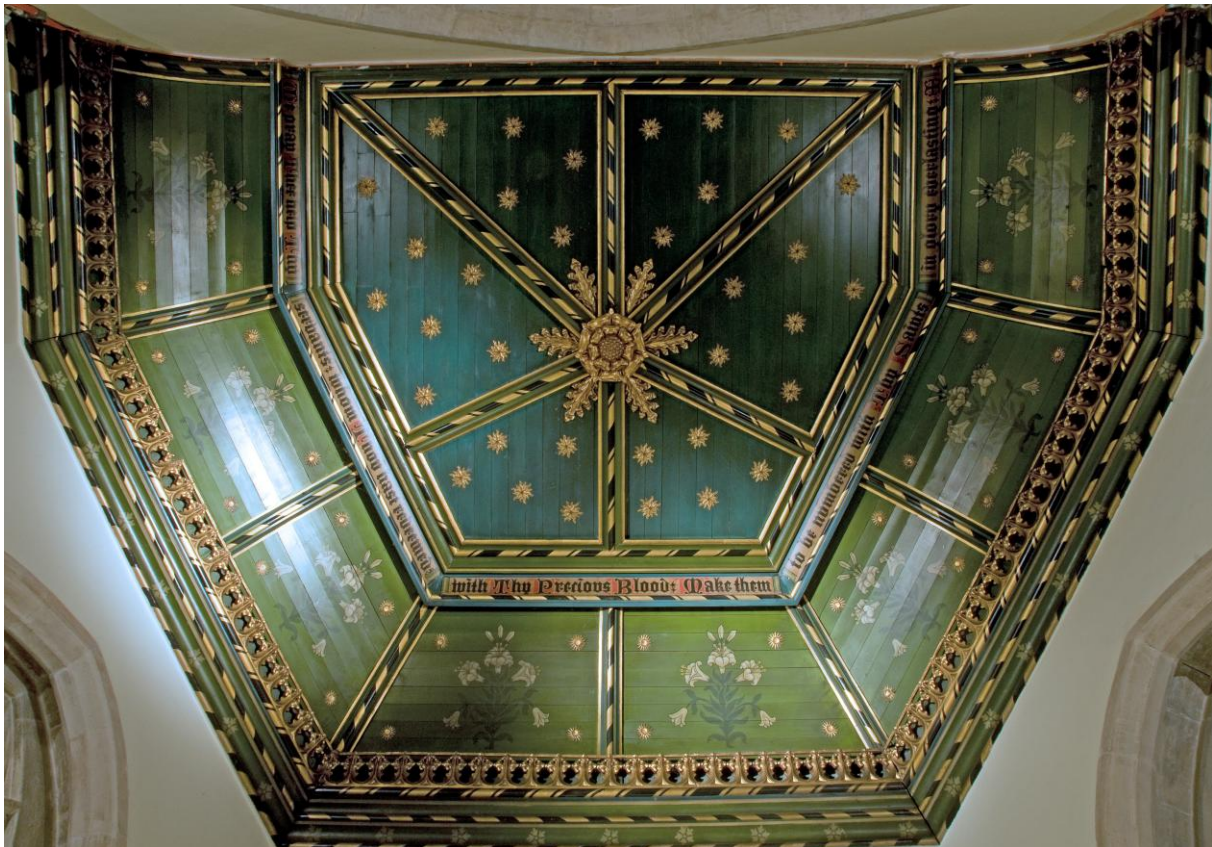
Since 1990, an electronic organ, with a detached, oak-faced console located at the liturgical east end of the liturgical south aisle with speakers concealed within the old organ has provided accompaniment for congregational services.

(Full details and specifications of the earlier organs in the church can be obtained on request from Paul Velluet on [paul.velluet@velluet.com](mailto:paul.velluet@velluet.com). The Willis organ can still be heard on *Three Richmond Organs*, recorded in October and November 1981, on Priory Records, PR 110).

## The restoration of the All Saints Chapel

As noted above, the All Saints Chapel was created in 1915-1916 by extending and altering the original aisle on the liturgical south side of the chancel. At the same time, a beautifully detailed arched opening was formed through the wall to link the new space to the chancel. The chapel contains some of the finest work of Cecil Hare in the church, including beautifully crafted, oak sedilia, desks and communion rails.

In 1974, an aumbry was installed in the sanctuary of the chapel under the direction of Paul Velluet, providing for the first time the scope for the permanent reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in the church. At the same time a hanging silver sanctuary lamp was added, suspended from the gilded boss at the centre of the richly coloured and decorated ceiling above. In 1975, the unsightly studwork partitions which had filled the arched openings to the chancel and to the aisle since the late 1950s, were removed by a team of pupils from the local St. Mary Magdalene's Church of England Comprehensive School under the direction of John Fox-Russell and Paul Velluet and the original spaciousness and integrity of the chapel recovered. In 1976, a small reproduction of the original late-11<sup>th</sup>-century/early-12<sup>th</sup>-century *Vladimir* icon of the Mother of God was installed in the sanctuary of the chapel.



**All Saint's Chapel ceiling. From Paul Velluet's archives & added by FoSM, April 2025**

Between 1983 and 1984, extensive works for conservative cleaning of the painted ceilings and the removal of layers of paint from the stonework of the arch to the sanctuary and of the window dressings were undertaken by a team from the Community Task Force under the direction of Graham Lloyd-Jones. The work revealed once again the original Bath Stone surfaces.

Finally, in more recent years, the lighting of the chapel has been completely renewed under the direction of Peter Bowyer and an elegant, silver, sanctuary lamp installed above the aumbry.



## Acknowledgements

This guide and history has been researched and written on behalf The Friends of St. Matthias' by Paul Velluet, RIBA, 'IHBC, and draws upon earlier work undertaken for the preparation of *Church of Saint Matthias – A brief guide and history*, published in May 1984, and additional research of material held by the church, the Borough of Richmond upon Thames Council's Local Studies Collection, the Surrey County Records Office and the author's own archive. With thanks to clergy and laity past and present. Reprinted with corrections and minor amendments, July, 2011.

Additions made in this version have been made by the Friends of St Matthias in April 2025, taking archive material supplied by Paul and included here for the addition of the history document to the new website (30 April 2025).



The architect selected to design and realise the construction of the new church was the eminent and prolific Victorian architect, George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878). That such a commission for designing a large, new, Anglican church on a prestigious site should fall to Scott is unsurprising. In the 1850s, Scott was the leading church architect of his generation and an acknowledged leader of the Gothic Revival.

**Added by FoSM, April 2025.**