

**S**t Mary's is the Friends' first Roman Catholic vesting: it came to us from the Diocese of Clifton in 2011. It was built in 1937 to serve a community of nuns, and has fulfilled that role for two such groups, now moved elsewhere.

## Origins of the chapel

Bertha Kessler and Katherine Hudson served during World War I in the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry: both suffered mental illness as a result.

In 1920 in London they encountered a dynamic Congregationalist minister, W E Orchard, whose interests embraced psychiatry and Catholicism. He suggested they had a calling: caring for mental illness through spiritual healing.

Their first patient (1923) was a girl from Gloucester. In 1927 they bought Tanglewood (renamed Templewood), a house standing next to the present church. They ministered to female patients there until 1934. They were both received into the Catholic church that year. The Bishop of Clifton, inspired by their work, suggested they might build a chapel.

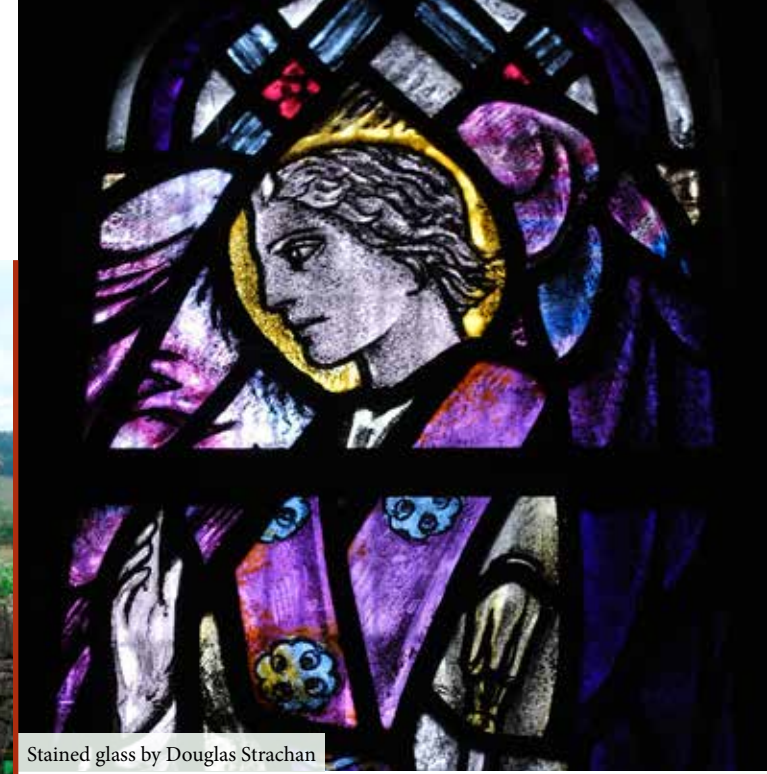


## The building of the church

The architect, W D Carøe (1857-1938) had built more than 30 new churches - Anglican and non-conformist: he was Architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners from 1895. Brownhill was his only Roman Catholic commission.

His previous church was on Cyprus - St George, Troodos, built for the island's ex-pats. His influences were eclectic: a Byzantine apse; a Norman chancel arch; a Swedish original for the woodwork of the west gallery.

He provided for a presbytery - you can see the stonework at the northeast corner awaiting completion. It never materialised.



Stained glass by Douglas Strachan

## The interior

At the east end, gold mosaic backs a plinth for a crucifix. The massive altar has a small recess where the 'mensa' would have been placed over the holy relics: without it, the altar is only a table.

In the apse, three glowing windows by Douglas Strachan (1875-1950), Scotland's foremost stained glass artist. Miss Kessler was brought up in Aberdeenshire, and knew Strachan's windows in the church in the village of (appropriately) Glass. The strong impression they made on her created an ambition to commission him.

The church was re-ordered in 1973, following Vatican II, but all of Carøe's furnishings remain, except the altar rail.



## After it was built

In 1937 the community became Templewood Home of Rest: as the work grew, properties in Brownhill were bought. Male patients were also now accepted - many of them priests.

Recovered female patients often became helpers: from this grew a Tertiary Chapter of the Dominican Order in 1951, with Miss Hudson as Mother Catherine. An American order (Congregation of the Servants of the Paraclete), dedicated to the care of troubled priests, arrived in 1959. The two founding ladies died in 1963. The community was reconstituted as The Little Company of Hope in 1976. In 1996, aged 88, the mother superior, Sr Philomena handed over to the Congregation of Mary, based at Derby. The nuns left Brownhill in 2006.

A dramatic footnote: Templewood House was destroyed in 1946 when a Lancaster bomber, lost on its way back to base, crashed into it. All the aircrew died, but the people in the house survived.



**Other Friends' churches across the River Severn**

**Llanfihangel Rogiet Church** Stands between two farmsteads. Mostly medieval, with 1904 north aisle. Medieval effigies. Parish's most famous resident was Henry Jones, inventor of self-raising flour!

**St David, Llangeview** Largely 15th century, including screen and rood loft. Medieval font. 18th century pulpit and pews, including squire's pew in the chancel. Altar rails from about 1700.

**St Mary, Llanfair Kilgeddin** Walls filled with glorious, complete, unique scheme of colourful Arts & Crafts sgraffiti panels by Heywood Sumner depicting verses from the Benedicite in a local setting.

**Llancillo Church** Our most difficult church to find! Mostly medieval, rescued and repaired a century ago. 13th century font and chest; pulpit (mostly 1632); an intense East Window by William Pearce of Birmingham.



**Who are the Friends?**

The Friends love unloved churches. Without us, they would be torn down, sold as houses, or abandoned. Since 1957 we have campaigned for redundant churches to be preserved, as "sermons in stone".

In Wales our work is funded by Cadw and the Church in Wales. But in England we rely on the generosity of donors and members.

**What do we do?**

We preserve these churches for the local community and visitors to enjoy. We make them wind and water-tight, put back roofs and windows, repair drainpipes and stonework. And we make sure they are open, or have nearby friendly guardians to keep an eye on them. Friendless no more!

Please, will you join in and help us?

Maintaining and repairing them is a huge challenge. We rely on the generosity of people like you...

**Join**

Go online to [friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk](http://friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk). Your membership helps us to save churches. In addition, you will receive two beautiful newsletters, full of information about conservation projects, talks, meetings and books.




**Donate**

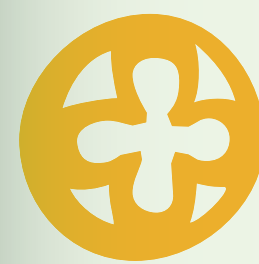
Send a cheque, payable to 'Friends of Friendless Churches' to FoFC, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ.

Or go to our website.

We take great pride in spending only small amounts on admin. Donations go directly towards saving and repairing churches. A legacy could make an even greater difference. Do speak to the Director on 020 7236 3934.

[friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk](http://friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk)

Find us on social media     
Registered Charity No : 1113097



**FRIENDS OF FRIENDLESS CHURCHES**



*Church of St Mary of the Angels  
Brownshill*

*a guide to its history*



(Llanfihangel Rogiet, Llangeview and Llancillo are open. For Llanfair Kilgeddin please ring the office)