

Rediscovered 100 year-old Arts and Crafts embroidery on view at All Saint's Church, Witley, Sundays 30 October and 6 November



These are exciting times for All Saints' Church in Witley: a hundred-year-old beautiful embroidered pall has just been discovered in the church's vestry. This find has come to light thanks to ongoing research by art historian Dr Claire FitzGerald. The design is by Arts and Crafts embroiderer Mary Newill (1860-1947), whose brother Rev. Edward Joseph Newill was vicar of Witley from 1909 to 1927. As a pall its purpose is to cover caskets during funerals. It was gifted to the church in 1916 by the local parishioner Mrs Horsley Palmer. On this occasion it was put on display for a fortnight so that local churchgoers could admire it. Almost three by two metres in

size, exquisitely embroidered flowers and lettering stand out from the pall's deep indigo background.

Its maker, Mary Newill, was born in Shropshire. She attended the Birmingham Municipal School of Art from 1885. After graduating she trained as a teacher and became one of the school's staff. Newill was instrumental in the implementation of an Arts and Crafts approach to art education, as main teacher of embroidery in Birmingham until 1922. Alongside this, she worked on several commissions for stained glass and embroidery notably with the Bromsgrove Guild of Arts. Newill regularly exhibited with the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, of whom she was a member. Her work was repeatedly featured in the influential *Studio* magazine. Whilst well-recognised in her time, Mary Newill has been overlooked by history. Leaving no descendants and with few surviving works, little is known about her today. Examples of her needlework are namely held at the V&A in London and the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. These, however, are rarely shown to the public.

There will be an opportunity for members of the public to view the pall in All Saints Church, Witley, on Sunday **30 October**, from 11.00am – 12 noon with Holy Communion at 8 a.m. and Parish Eucharist at 9.45 a.m. The following week, Sunday **6 November**, it will be on display all day as part of the church's birthday celebrations and Gift Day – see [web-site](#) for further details.