

*Days Out with a
religious theme:*

**Shobdon – a
very special
church**



St John the Evangelist Shobdon

- In July 2019 Magda and Martin visited Hergest Croft Gardens near Kington in Herefordshire and St John the Evangelist, a Grade One Listed Church in Shobdon
- One of the longer day trips, Hergest Croft takes around 1 hour 40 minutes from Sedgley.



Shobdon Arches

Arches from the interior of the original church building were removed in the 18th century to form a feature in the grounds of Shobdon Court, the Bateman family home.



The rebuild

The third and present church consisted of a completely new nave, which was built onto the 13th century tower, by John Bateman.

Between 1749-52, Bateman undertook a complete rebuilding in the Gothic Revival style. The architect is unknown.

Bateman's uncle was a friend of Horace Walpole and many members of their circle have been suggested as possible designers.



The Walpole connection

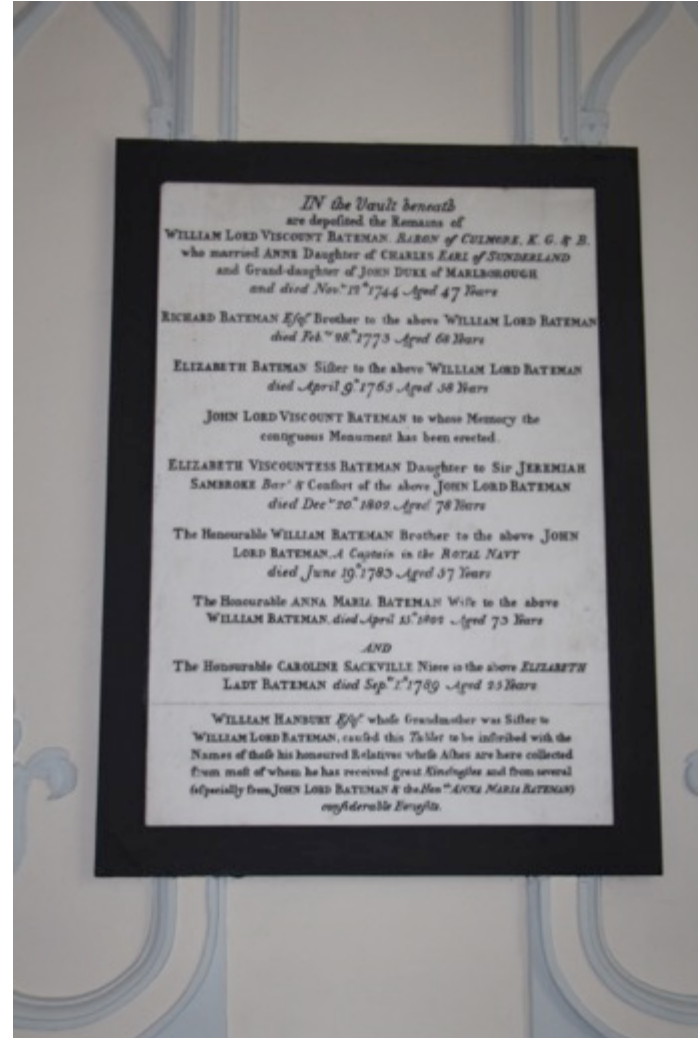
The youngest son of the Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole, Horace Walpole (1717-1797) was one of the eighteenth century's most famous writers, collectors and socialites. A pioneer of the Gothic taste in art, architecture and literature, he formed an exceptional collection at Strawberry Hill, the 'little Gothic castle' which he designed in Twickenham.



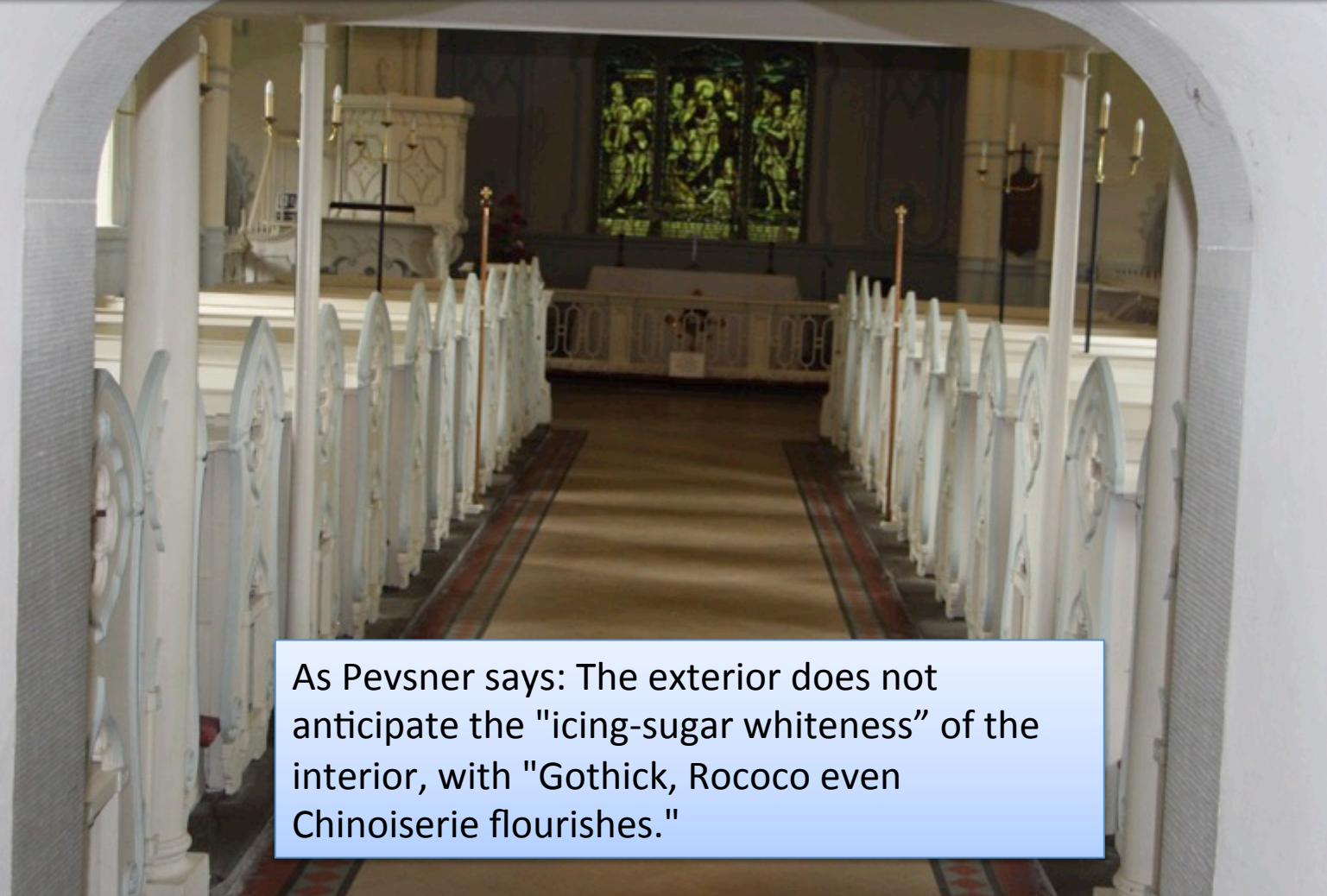
A complete masterpiece of Rococo

Simon Jenkins, in his book *England's Thousand Best Churches*, considers the interior "a complete masterpiece (of) English Rococo."

A memorial tablet on the wall of the church lists the members of the Bateman family who are buried in its vault.



This unique parish church built in the style of 'Strawberry Hill Gothic' was built in the 1750s, on the site of a Norman Church. It is the only example still existing of this 'Walpolean Gothik' style of architecture and furnishing.



As Pevsner says: The exterior does not anticipate the "icing-sugar whiteness" of the interior, with "Gothick, Rococo even Chinoiserie flourishes."

It has a direct connection to Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill in Twickenham and the members of the "Committee of Taste" which strongly influenced its design. Its amazingly intact interior and matching furniture are the sole example of this Walpolean Gothick style of Georgian church architecture and furnishing.



The pulpit has a sounding board or 'tester' above it.

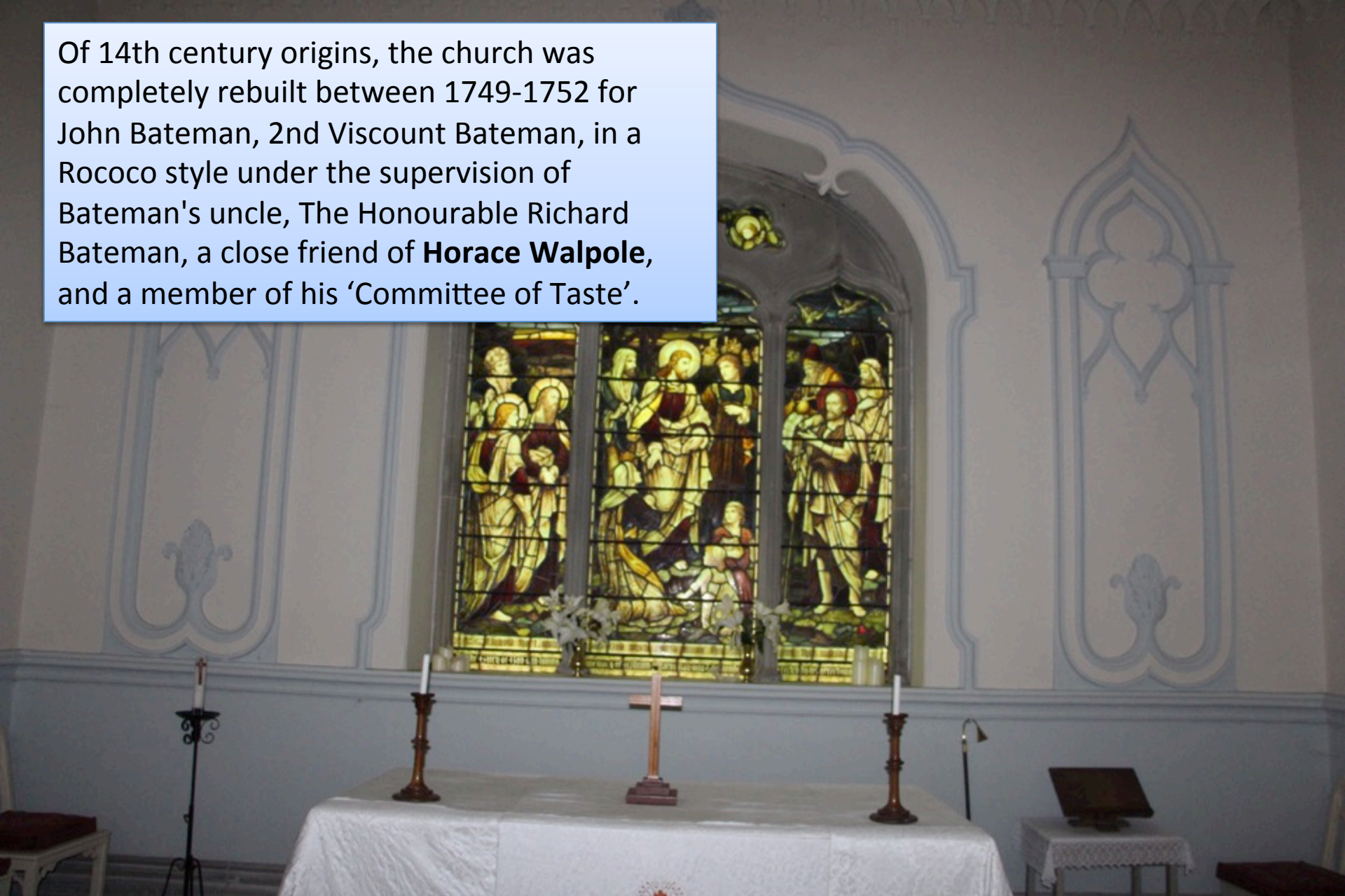
The design is based on the Kent design for York Minster.



Beautiful stained glass windows in the church.



Of 14th century origins, the church was completely rebuilt between 1749-1752 for John Bateman, 2nd Viscount Bateman, in a Rococo style under the supervision of Bateman's uncle, The Honourable Richard Bateman, a close friend of **Horace Walpole**, and a member of his 'Committee of Taste'.





The style is clearly influenced by the contemporary Strawberry Hill House built in Twickenham, London by Horace Walpole and by the works of Batty Langley. Horace was the son of the first British Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole.



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Looking back to the rear of the nave and to the glorious gallery.

Hergest Croft Gardens



Hergest Croft Gardens lies in the heart of the Welsh Marches with stunning views towards the Black Mountains. There are gorgeous flower borders, an old fashioned Kitchen Garden, Azalea Garden, Maple Grove, and Park Wood, all to discover.

About the gardens



The gardens are owned by the Banks family. The Banks' family's roots in Kington go back over 200 years, and five generations of them have planted exotic trees and gardened on the Hergest Estate.



WE explored the vegetable garden first which was in full bloom with some stunning colours.



An unusual sculpture
in the gardens



A great day out

The combination of visiting a truly unique church and a splendid Herefordshire garden in mid-summer was a wonderful experience.



Sources of information

Hergest Croft Gardens:

<http://www.hergest.co.uk/#>

St John Church in Shobdon: [https://](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_John)

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_John

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Horace Walpole: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp03378/horatio-horace-walpole-4th-earl-of-orford>

Strawberry Hill House: [https://](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strawberry_Hill_House)

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