

## St John the Baptist, France Lynch

Until the nineteenth century, France Lynch was part of the ancient parish of Bisley. On Sundays, devout families would walk to morning service at Bisley Church taking dinner with them, and then attend the afternoon service before returning home. But after his appointment as Vicar of Bisley in 1827, Thomas Keble set out to build churches in the outlying parts of his parish. In 1855, it was France Lynch's turn.

Keble chose as his architect George Frederick Bodley (1827-1907), a former student of Gilbert Scott. France Lynch was one of the first of his many churches, and has distinctive features, a French style, a tall bellcote and an altar six steps higher than the nave. All the excellent stone carving was done by Thomas Earp, a London craftsman. Various stones were used to add colour to the sanctuary and pulpit, including brown marble, blue lapis lazuli and green malachite. A framed statement of accounts hangs in the upper vestry, the overall cost being £2, 722.13s 7d., most of it met by an anonymous contributor. Most of the furnishings are original. The font is of Devonshire marble.

Consecrated in 1857, the church was at first a chapel of ease to Bisley, served by a priest in charge. Its first vicar was appointed in 1894 when Sir John Dorington of Lypiatt Park gave an endowment of £1000. In 1991 it became a joint parish with Chalford, and in 2004 became one benefice with Bisley and Oakridge.

The church is open each day during daylight hours, and visitors are encouraged to enjoy its tranquility and restfulness.