

## FRIENDS ANNUAL LECTURE by CHRIS ROGERS

### “OF PROPHETS PRIESTS AND KINGS”

**3<sup>rd</sup> FEBRUARY 2024**

The Reformation of the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century and the iconoclasm associated with the Commonwealth period saw the wholesale destruction of stained glass in England, an art form that can be traced back to late 7<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, there are some spectacular survivals such as the windows in Canterbury cathedral. However perhaps the most spectacular are the 24 windows which line the chapel at King's College Cambridge. The chapel, begun at the behest of King Henry VI was finished in 1515 with a substantial injection of funds left by King Henry VII who had died in 1509. It is likely that the windows were assembled by a team of glaziers under the leadership of Bernard Flower. After Flower's death the remaining windows were completed by Garyon Hone from cartoons many of which were made by Derrick Vellert, a product of the North European Renaissance.

Fairford church is one of the other surviving glazing schemes from pre-Reformation times. The manor of Fairford had passed through the Plantagenet and Neville families and eventually to the young Earl of Warwick, son of the Duke of Clarence. In the early years of Henry VII's reign Warwick, a potential legitimate heir to the throne was executed and the manor of Fairford was vested in the Crown. Although the church had been completed by about 1490 by a wealthy wool merchant, John Tame, it is most likely that this complete collection of stained-glass windows may have been endowed by King Henry VII. (Guilty conscience?) it is most probable that the glass was made by the King's glazier, Bernard Flower and his team of glaziers in London. Perhaps it is their royal provenance that ensures their survival during the Reformation.

The art of stained glass making was therefore dormant until the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, there are some exceptions to this statement. Abraham and Bernard Van Linge, Flemings from Antwerp worked in England between 1623 and 1650. Their glass is not strictly stained, but painted glass. The plain glass is coloured with a paste of pigment and ground glass and then fired to 800 degrees to fix the colour as an enamel. The fine details are then painted on before being fixed in another firing. It is very distinctive to the observer as the scenes are uninterrupted by the leadwork.

The finest of these windows are to be found in Oxford, with one at Christchurch, and sets in both University and Lincoln Colleges. Unusually two Van Linge windows are to be found in Wiltshire. One is in the church of Saint Mary in Lydiard. The east window shows Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist flanking a tree supporting the shields of several generations of the St John family who owned the manor. In the adjacent Mansion there is an astonishing 'secular' window composed of multiple lozenges, each of which is painted with a tiny scene, animals and birds and flowers while others portray people and there is even a boat hove to in the wind!

The late 18<sup>th</sup> century saw more painted glass being made, not always with much success. The east window, showing the Conversion of Saint Paul (a copy of Benjamin West's painting) in Saint Paul's church in Birmingham is little more than blobs of colour, since the paint has oxidized into a dull and near-impenetrable brown. Rather better is the Brazen Serpent raised in the gable arch over the east end of Salisbury cathedral, given in 1781 by the Earl of Radnor.

By the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the religious and social environment shifted very rapidly. The Emancipation of the Catholics Act of 1829 created a market for new churches. At much the same time John Keble's sermon at the Oxford Assizes Service launched a fierce attack on the creeping

secularization and materialism of contemporary society. This was developed by the Tractarian or Oxford Movement whose 'Tracts for the Times' unleashed debate about the nature and role of the Established Church, while the Camden Society's publications sought to demonstrate how the new theology could be translated into church building. At the same time the Industrial revolution had created a seismic shift in population with the growth of new towns and suburbs, which required pathways to salvation in the form of new churches. There was no shortage of wealthy philanthropists making their money in the new industries and keen to secure their place in Paradise. Furthermore, there were new materials being made, often cheaply and in industrial quantities. An interest in our history, popularized by Sir Walter Scott's novels also helped create the seedbed for a revival of 'medievalism.

Into this febrile atmosphere slipped Augustus Pugin. In a series of wildly popular books, especially **The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture**, and **Contrasts; A Parallel between Noble edifices of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and Similar buildings of the Present Day**' He introduced the nation to medievalism and the Gothic revival. . He converted to Rome in 1835. His first masterly church at Saint Giles Cheadle, built for the Earl of Shrewsbury (Roman Catholic, Medievalist and immensely rich!) is a jewel box of all things 'Medieval'; iron and woodwork, stained glass, painted and stencilled walls. This was followed by Saint Mary in Derby and Saint Chad's new Roman Catholic cathedral in Birmingham. Some of the stained glass and the metalwork were provided by Jonhn Hardman and Co. of Birmingham. John Hardman was a fellow Roman Catholic convert and belonged to the Birmingham 'metal basing tradition'. By the time of his untimely death Pugin had decorated some forty churches and three cathedrals. Inevitably, established Anglican patrons kept their distance from the Roman Catholic convert, but it was the Anglican 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire who commissioned Pugin to provide the windows at Bolton Abbey, the Devonshire estate in Yorkshire; three huge windows with 18 vignettes of scenes from the life of Christ. They are very carefully made and each bears similarities to 13<sup>th</sup> century prototypes in Canterbury.

Pugin was disappointed with his windows at Bolton since the colours were not quite what he had envisaged. The background is too fussy and detracted from the panels themselves. The same can be said for the Bartley window in Saint Mary the Virgin church (the University church) in Oxford. Each lancet shows a scene from the life of Saint Thomas, the canopies are very complex and appear to be held in place by ugly buttresses and all is dominated by a lurid electric blue sky, making the browns and yellows of the figures very drab indeed.

Part of the problem was getting suitable glass. How had the medieval masters made their glass? Hardmans was pretty good, and made most of the glass for Pugin, but by the time of Pugin's death in 1852 great strides had been made in creating convincing glass. Charles Winston, a London lawyer by profession, devoted much of his life to recording medieval glass. His drawings are immaculate (not least the drawings he made of the grisaille glass at Salisbury Cathedral). In later life he devoted much time to studying the scientific aspects of stained glass, making numerous experiments in an attempt to establish how medieval craftsman had made their coloured glass. James Hartley of Sunderland finally made glass to Pugin's satisfaction while Francis Wilson Oliphant wrote a series of important and widely read works on stained glass. His 'Enquiry' was first published in 1847.

The huge demand for stained glass that the Christian Revival generated was quickly met by a series of glass makers, good and less good. The fruits of their labours remain visible in churches throughout the land. James Powell of Whitefriars began making glass in 1860 and made some of the glass used by Morris and Co. Lavers and Barraud was another firm making quality glass. They were responsible for the glass in Saint Peter's church in Marlborough. The east window is an especially good example of their work. Perhaps the most authoritative was Clayton and Bell. This company made some of the

best glass of the day and employed some very fine designers. Their windows are brilliantly luminous and they were very aware of medieval designs in their biblical story telling. Their windows in the Trinity Chapel at Salisbury and the west window in Marlborough College chapel (another Te Deum window) are fine examples of their work.

In the same year as Pugin's death Edward Burne-Jones had sat the matriculation papers for Exeter College Oxford, He was admitted to the university in 1853 where a fellow undergraduate at Exeter College was William Morris Both men had already been inspired by the Tractarian Movement and an abhorrence of the 'machine age' 'Recently restored in Oxford was the chapel at Merton College and the cleaned 13<sup>th</sup> century glass there was a source of much inspiration.

The young Burne-Jones included some stained glass amongst his earliest work. Surviving are the windows in the dining hall at Bradfield College, and the Saint Frideswide in Christchurch Cathedral Oxford. Here, in some sixteen panels, are scenes from the life and death of the Saxon saint to whom the cathedral is dedicated. The scenes are composed of small fragments of bright jewel-like glass to create a rich mosaic. There is nothing sanctimonious or other worldly about these scenes. They are more like cartoons from a comic script. In 'the Death of Saint Frideswide', for example, an open door behind the dying saint shows a toilet complete with a lifted lid!

It was in 1862 that 'The Firm, Morris, Marshall, Falkner and Co. was registered, probably the most influential of all design companies. Renowned as designers of fabrics and wall papers, they turned their hand to stained glass production. In this respect they were initially helped on their way by the architect George Bodley, who was commissioned to produce a new church for Sir Samuel Marling in the hillside above his mills at Stroud; All Saints Church at Selsley. Morris and Co were invited to produce all the stained glass for the church, a complete set remaining in place to this day. Philip Webb, with whom Morris, on leaving Oxford, had trained as an architect, produced a wonderful west window with God the Father in the centre surrounded by two circles, the outer of which has eight striking roundels showing the story of Creation from Genesis. The south aisle has three 'banner' windows clearly modelled on Merton College. Burne-Jones drew the cartoon for Christ Blessing the Children, Rosetti the Sermon on the Mount and Morris himself Saint Paul Preaching at Athens. There in the crowd of saints and observers are portraits of Morris' contemporaries and friends, including an unmistakable Janey Morris, a very demure Christina Rossetti as 'S. Maria Mater Dei '(written into her halo) while next to her is Mary Magdalene (peccatrix) modelled on Fanny Cornforth!

The apse has five wonderful scenes from the life of Christ, each produced by a different member of the 'brotherhood.' Rossetti produced the Visitation, while Ford Maddox Brown produced a delightfully rustic Nativity. Mary, in green is wearing a beanie, while Joseph, his bag of carpenter's tools hanging from a nail, is blowing on a spoonful of soup which he is offering to his wife. The Resurrection window has Christ, rising from the tomb like a missile out of a silo, with a terrified Roman soldier sprawled at the foot of the tomb. In the Ascension window Christ has almost disappeared, with just his feet visible below the cloud, a devise that first appears in medieval descriptions of the Resurrection. William Morris contributed an Annunciation window The two panels are set in lightly patterned quarries with Mary, in simple naivety, dressed in a magnificent embroidered dress kneeling at a rough-hewn prie-dieu, turning round to greet the Angel Gabriel, his cloak billowing, carrying a wonderful lily.

The 'Firm' were awarded many commissions over the following decade, with each of the familiar artists providing designs. Bloxham and Middleton Cheney either side of Banbury, are two of the best. In Banbury the east window is composed of pairs of saints, prophets and kings, with a verse from the Te Deum beneath each pair. Instead of the traditional canopied niche in the tracery of the window

there are the massed domes, and roofs of a medieval cityscape, the Heavenly City no less. The real gem here is a tiny window in a squint giving visibility from the south aisle to the main altar. Here Burne-Jones created a wonderful image of Saint Christopher in a brilliant red tunic and wading through the waters of deepest blue, carrying the infant child sleeping seraphically on his shoulder. It is one of the most intimate and personal images that Burne-Jones ever produced.

Middleton Cheney is just east of Banbury, a village in that warm Northamptonshire ironstone country. The east window here is another of the Firm's distinctive windows. The three lights of the window contain pairs of biblical figures, once again modelled on Morris and his friends. Janey Morris was the model for Saint Catherine (her attribute); the wheel being embraided into her underskirt. In the tracery of all three lancets are the banners of the 10 tribes of Israel, individually drawn figures, each posing beneath a banner with the name of the tribe inscribed thereon. Ford Maddox Brown, Philip Webb and William Morris shared the task of drawing the figures along with Simeon Solomon, a fine painter and a Jew, who was provided with the task of portraying the Old Testament figures. However, it is the west window that is most arresting. The three lancets are filled with the three Holy Children as recorded in the Book of Daniel. Swirling yellow flames envelop each figure, two in green and one in blue as they stand unharmed in the fiery furnace. Burne-Jones' cartoon for this window was exhibited to much sensation at the Grosvenor Gallery exhibition in 1877. Even the librettist W.S. Gilbert was sufficiently influenced to make a passing reference in *Patience*:

**A greenery-gallery, Grosvenor Gallery, Foot-in- the- Grave young man.**

In the early 1870's 'The Firm' produced three more windows in Christchurch Cathedral in Oxford. The first of these, was installed in 1872 in memory of an undergraduate from the wealthy Vyner family, killed by brigands in Albania. Four pre-Raphaelite biblical figures fill the lights, Samuel, David, Saint John, and Timothy. Each is a delicate composition, the two outer figures wear billowing tunics while King David and Saint John the Evangelist wear richly gold-spangled robes. All four sport flashed ruby haloes, and beneath each is a predella showing a scene from the life of that individual. The young Samuel is being instructed by the priest Eli, while David is shown with the slain Goliath. The cartoon for this window was used again in Marlborough College chapel, but only the two outer figures, both, appropriately, young men under instruction, are present. The ruby haloes are missing, but the background is one of a rich and verdant grove studded with luscious ripening oranges. The overall green of the window is in sharp contrast to the red and blue colours of the surrounding windows. In Christchurch the adjacent chapel to the Vyner window, shows Saint Cecilia. The saint is swathed in a white garment, and she carried her 'attribute' a portative organ. On either side of her are angels with wonderful blue wings. Next comes the Saint Catherine window donated by Dean Lidell (father of Alice) in memory of his other daughter Edith, who died aged 22 in 1876. Here too there are predella panels showing scenes from the life of the saint. When Frideswide was being pursued by the rampant Aelfgar, Earl of Leicester and a Prince of the Mercian royal house, she appealed for help from these two patron saints to defend her chastity. Aelfgar was suitably struck blind and the 'chase' ended. At the western end of the cathedral is the remaining pre-Raphaelite window, 'Spes, Caritas and Fides'. This window has all three figures in richly attired garments set in a background of greenery and luscious vines. It is said that Spes (Hope) was modelled by Mary Zambucco, Burne-Jones' erstwhile mistress.

George and Rosalind Howard were wealthy aristocrats and close friends of Morris and Burne-Jones. When George inherited the Earldom of Carlisle, Castle Howard came into his possession. Here, as part of a badly needed refurbishment, the chapel was improved with lovely windows showing the Christmas story, each intimate scene placed on a black and white marble floor. This cartoon for

these windows were used again as late as 1907 for the Epiphany chapel at Winchester Cathedral. In both cases Mary is stooped in a humble and unassuming pose.

Portraying angels was a common theme in Morris and Co glass. Five magnificent angels with either blue or red wings set against a vivid blue sky punctuated with golden stars dominate the south aisle at Tilehurst near Reading. Each angel carries an antique musical instrument. Morris was fascinated by many aspects of the medieval world. The Angeli Laudantes and Angeli Ministrantes window is in Salisbury Cathedral; the 'flashed' colours of the angels set in a background of inter-twined ivy leaves, very Morris. Perhaps the loveliest of them all is the Nativity scene surrounded by adoring angels in the Gladstone memorial window in Hawarden church North Wales.

Edwar Burne Jones was born in Birmingham and educated at King Edward's School there. In the last decade of his life he produced windows for the city church of Saint Martin in the Bull Ring as well as four huge windows at Sant Philips, The baroque church had been built in 1715 by Thomas Archer and sensitively extended with a choir and apse in a classical manner when the church was raised to cathedral status in 1863. Three of the windows are in the apse, huge windows which are created on the curve; some challenge to the glassmakers. Burne Jones, an avowed medievalist, hated this classical building calling it as 'fit for a public library into which they should turn it'. However, three gorgeous windows portray the Nativity, the Crucifixion and the Ascension. Unusually it is the Ascension window that occupies pride of place in the centre. Two rows of figures, one earthly and the other heavenly dominate the picture, with Christ in the centre of apostles. The whole image bears the imprint of the Raphael cartoons. However, it is the Last Judgement, at the western end of the church (another established convention,) that is the most arresting. Here again there are two planes torn about by the paroxysms of an earthquake destroying the worldly city. Below, fear, terror and chaos, some people heaving themselves out of the grave, some looking on in fear An enormous ruby angel sounds an enormous last trump, surrounded by angels, several of whom are carrying thuribles, while towards the top is Christ in majesty surrounded by the heavenly host. Christ, the Pascal Lamb, who is wearing a crown of thorns is dressed in white and has his hand raised in benediction. 'Fear not for all things Come to Pass, but in me lies Redemption and Salvation'. It was Burne-Jones last commission and what a worthy tribute it is too.

In the century or so since Burne-Jones death, the art of stained glass making has flourished and there are many fine examples to be seen in our churches. Marc Chagall provided a complete set of windows for Tudeley in Kent and a dazzling window in Chichester. John Piper: s windows in Saint Margaret's, Westminster and his Britten Memorial window in Aldeburgh are highlights, while the contemporary glassmaker Tom Denny has provided spectacular windows in Gloucester Cathedral, Tewkesbury Abbey and Malvern Priory, to name but three. He is currently completing a window here in Wiltshire at Tisbury. So, the tradition continues!