



Sat 21 July: Some stained glass delights in Herts

On a Saturday in July, Alf Fisher trustfully left his steam engine in the care of others, and about 16 of us met him and Doris Rollinson at Holy Cross Church, Sarratt. It was a lovely morning after the relentless weeks of rain so there was a spring-like 'sense of renewal' in the air. There we started the day's viewing of a programme with potentially over 50 windows to see, the list devised by Alf and Doris Rollinson; it was a day long in the planning and a treat worth waiting for. We first looked at two windows by the Christopher Whall studio, then gathered at a lovely chancel window by Alf (1970s) depicting the dove of the Holy Ghost and some of the flora and fauna of Hertfordshire. The donor whose family had commissioned it was there to discuss it. Then Doris related how she had commissioned Alf to do a window (above) in her husband's memory based on an Anglo-Saxon poem 'The Dream of the Rood' which tells in very visually worded prose of a great jewel-like tree symbolizing Christ on the Cross, yet also 'The Tree of Life'. (Contact Doris for a transcript.) It is very different from Alf's usual style and he said it was a challenge to do. It is rich in execution with a beautiful range of staining hues, from palest yellow to deep amber gold.



The next church was St Paul, Chipperfield, with fine Webb Bros windows, and two tall colourful lancets by John Lawson (there was something intriguing in the scale of the imagery in these large lancets, I'm not sure if it totally worked). However, chunks of hot red dalle de verre flames leaded in added interest. We then contemplated the West window 'The risen Christ' (detail above) designed and beautifully painted by John Hayward. Doris spoke briefly about this work and before we left she pointed out something rather unusual: in a glass partition about a third of the way up the church, standing with one's back to the West window looking East, one sees an extraordinary reflection of the rising Christ majestically floating in the air, as it were, in the centre of the church.

A good buffet lunch followed and we recharged our selves for the afternoon. Onwards to Chesham Bois where we saw a fine Martin Travers depicting scenes of Christ's Passion, and a number of small neat figures by Margaret Thompson. There was a series of 5 (I think) windows by Alf. Scenes of the young biblical figures showed the artist's real feeling for the subjects; they had been made over a long period so it was interesting to see stylistic development and variations; Alf commented on this himself. I think he was slightly taken aback to see so much of his work spanning over the years all there before him.

The tight schedule forced us on. Next stop was St James, Fulmer. Travelling in several cars, our car's navigator (me) had a lapse in concentration so we explored 'a dual carriageway too far', and arrived a little late. At this point also we lost a couple whose car decided it had done enough. Some lovely glass was awaiting: windows by Hoadley, Baillie, Powell, Egan & Fletcher, including lush gold stained heraldry surrounded by four Flemish roundels, showing the triumph of Love, Death, Faith and Chastity.

The final port of call was St Giles, Stoke Poges, a church endowed with a variety of glass from all ages, David Wasley's 'Love of God' being the most recent. My favorites were the Louis Davis, with his unsentimental direct style and free painting. There is also a single lancet, in the east-most South chancel corner: an armoured figure, I think a St Michael with Christ Child, looking much of the Whall school, but probably by another artist. Also a very famous 'Nude cyclist' (1643), provoking much discussion.

To sum up: a memorable day blessed with much needed sunshine. The company was very convivial; some new faces were seen, some old friends came, experts and glass veterans were seen deep in discussion throwing light on historical facts, mysterious ambiguities, and offering conjecture and insights. A distinguished architect in the company frequently brought our attention to other items of interest, which us blinkered 'glass people' would probably have missed. It was all fascinating and informative. (Suggestions for next year's 'BSMGP Saturdays' programme are very welcome.)

Andrew Taylor