



THURSDAY Our first visit was to St Mary Patrixbourne, a Norman church on the pilgrim's route from Canterbury to Rome. Here was a fine collection of Swiss stained glass from 1538 to 1670, given to the church by George IV's mistress, Marchioness of Conyngham. Amongst the panels was the legend of Pyramus and Thisbe (illustrating the moral theme of fidelity and love), and a man eating from a lunch basket on the St Gotthard Pass! Another had as a background a town on Lake Geneva, complete with a pub whose windows were made out of 'bottle-end glass'.

At St Andrew, Wickhambreux, a fine perpendicular style church by an idyllic village green, is a vivid E window in Art Nouveau style (1896) by Danish artist Arild Rosenkrantz – his first and possibly best-known work. Made in plated, etched opalescent glass in the USA by the New York Decorative Stained Glass Company using the innovative methods of John Lafarge (whose experiments in opalescent glass involved bone ash and arsenic, and rolling out slab glass between patterned rollers). Influenced by William Blake, the Pre-Raphaelites, Turner, Monet, and Rudolf Steiner (who wrote 'colours are the Soul of nature: we become part of that Soul when we live with colour'), the artist has produced a mystic vision, rich in swirling colours, of The Annunciation, the Virgin in a field of white lilies, one of which drips a single jewel of ruby blood (above). It is largely unpainted, except for the faces.

On to the seaside at Ramsgate, to a 1850 flint church designed and funded by Pugin (who called it 'his single fine ecclesiastical building'), with a complete Gothic Revival interior including tiles by Minton, brasses, metalwork and glass by John Hardman and his son-in-law Hardman Powell, and containing Pugin's tomb. Some of the Lady Chapel windows (dated 1848) were shown by Pugin in the 1851 Great Exhibition; others were installed after 1860 by the Pugin Memorial Committee; hence it is possible here to trace how John Hardman's style began to evolve after Pugin's death. There are also some fragments from the Sainte Chapelle, acquired by Pugin on his travels, and finally two 'mystery (19C?) roundels', possibly experimental pieces from Pugin's workshop depicting musician angels, and five 16C Netherlandish and German roundels from Pugin's collection.

On to Broadstairs, and lunch, which we followed by a visit to St Peter's. Here we found a fine collection of Gothic Revival glass by foremost Victorian firms (starting 1859 with Lavers & Barraud – designers Stacy Marks, Nathaniel Westlake and Milner Allen; then Heaton, Butler & Bayne, mainly from the 1860s; and others by Clayton & Bell, William Wailes and Burlison & Grylls). In the 1869 Moses window by Heaton & colleagues, one can see the movement of Victorian Gothic away from a conventionally medieval style towards a more naturalistic approach. The exception to the scheme was a 1921 WWI memorial East window (detail top centre), designed by A&C designer Louis Davis and made by Powell & Sons – a bright gem of glorious A&C pinks and blues, topped by swirling angels against a sea of stars!



The next stop was Margate, where at Selmestone Grange we found another treat, from a later A&C artist. Originally part of St Augustine's Abbey, this 14C grange where monks had kept their harvest grain was filled with John Trinick's windows made in 1938 to 55 – the pinnacle of his work. Trinick was very influenced by Burne-Jones when he studied at William Morris studios, and was a pupil of Christopher Whall. The E window, based on the text from John XII:23-5 'Unless a grain of wheat, falling into the ground ... it bringeth forth much fruit', depicts an elongated Virgin and Child, encased within a seed grain (detail above). Christ scatters seed, and is flanked by biblical characters associated with the sowing and reaping. The colour scheme throughout the chapel is dominated by deep blues, formed by myriad tiny pieces of glass, juxtaposed by brilliant whites – producing a harmonic atmosphere of deep serenity.

Our last stop of the day, at St James Westbrook, could not have been more of a contrast. The E window here is by Francis Spear, installed in 1960. Its theme is the 'Spread of the Holy Spirit' from the Pentecost to the present day. It is a triumph of dynamic design that 'hits you in the eye': from the Holy Dove at the top centre of design, a network of radiating lines appears to flood both outwards in space across the window and forwards in time towards the viewer (below). Around the 12 disciples of the Pentecost, with flames appearing from their heads, historical figures such as Pilgrim Fathers and St Francis Xavier represent the spread of the Word west to the Americas and east to Asia.



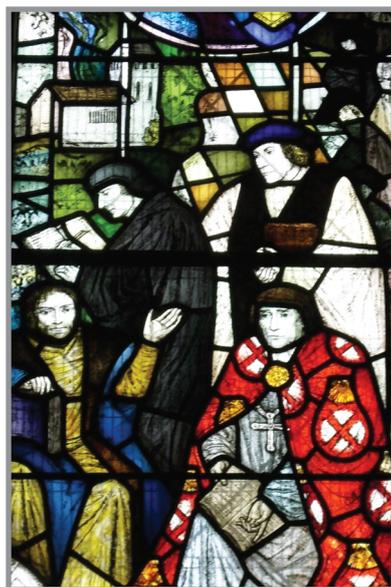
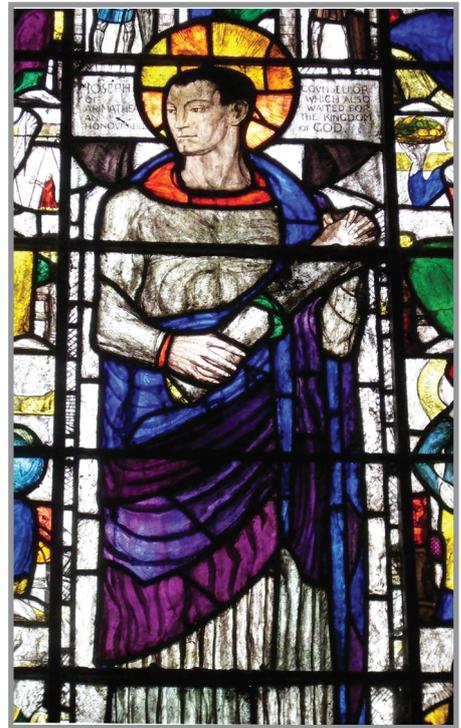
FRIDAY Friday's first stop was at Faversham, an important town from medieval times, as one of the cinque ports guarding the Channel. It has one of Kent's biggest parish churches, St Mary of Charity, with over 1400 sq metres of floor space, double-aisled transepts and a Georgian nave, designed by the architect of London's Mansion House to replace a collapsing tower in the mid 18C. Most windows are by Lavers, Barraud & Westlake, which replaced windows by Willement (now in the almshouses). Aside from this there are four late Clayton & Bell and a mid 20C piece believed to be by Martin Travers. Three small fragments of the medieval glass, mainly heraldic, remain – including an odd version of the Royal Arms of England in which the leopards face the wrong way!

At the almshouses, we saw the Thomas Willement window from St Mary's: a richly coloured Virgin & Child scene set within a border of geometric patterning. The arms of the cinque ports and the town seal appear at the base. Other glass is by Lavers and co.

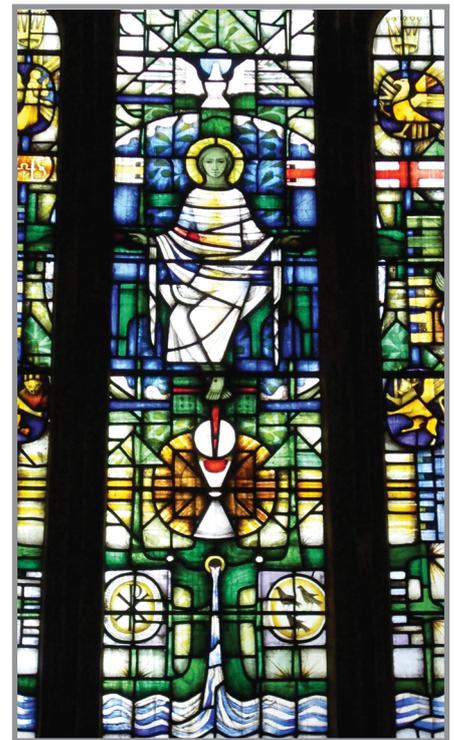
On to St Lawrence Otterden, set within the Otterden Estate of the Wheler family, now owned by a Trust. The chapel is a plain box-like structure erected to house a collection of church ornaments. It has some 1894 glass by Ward & Hughes and some Classical-style windows by James Fisher. But the highlight, for me, was the imposing 1933 Wilhelmina Geddes window for Sir James Wheler, with a monumental St Joseph of Arimathea, at the top the scene at Christ's tomb, and on either side seated female figures depicting the Virtues – their robes glowing like bright jewels against a background of white glass painted with black (right). The figures are exemplary of Geddes' finest work. Also here is a recent Wheler memorial, by Meg Lawrence, with flowers, a house and a boat appearing from a fascinating background formed from irregular polygons.

At Chilham, a picturesque hilltop that has often featured on TV and film, we had a nonchalant lunch. Inside the church there the glass was mainly Victorian, particularly by the 'usual suspects': William Wailes, Heaton, Butler & Bayne, Clayton & Bell, plus some by Charles Kempe. Also though, on the N side of the nave are the remains of the 15C ancient glass – including saints, angels and heraldic shields. Executed largely in paint and silver stain on a white background, edged in golden amber, the finest of these is a St Catherine with a most sensitively painted face, clutching her wheel.

On to Chartham, St Mary, a late 13C church that had been restored in 1873-5, though Charles Winston stated that much of the 1294 glass had thankfully been retained ... here be dragons, wyverns and other medieval monsters! I had some fun spotting them high amongst the N chancel glass.



We returned to Canterbury for the last stop, St Dunstan – a church with close links to Thomas Beckett and Thomas More. After Beckett's murder, Henry II started his penance here, walking in hair shirt to the chatedral. Thomas More's head was brought here from the Tower by his daughter, and now rests in a vault alongside her body under the Roper Chapel. Nestled amongst more Victorian glass are two modern windows by Lawrence Lee and John Hayward, gifted by foreign churches with links to More. Lee's has scenes from More's life, and references his famous portrait by Holbein (detail left). Hayward's window depicts Christ in white robes, flanked by Sts Peter and Paul and symbols of the Evangelists, and a white chalice containing a drop of blood (right). It is an uplifting colour composition of blues of and ambers, floating against a white background. The latest window is by Dave Griffiths – a charming St Cecilia with harpsichord, clothed in glowing green and gold.



Chris Wyard

BSMGP Conference 2016: A Personal View by Rachel Mulligan

The first day of the conference arrived. I left an unfinished stained glass panel in the studio and the family to fend for themselves, and took off to Canterbury to enjoy mixing with knowledgeable and informed people who share my passion for stained glass.

Many familiar faces greeted me, although fewer than previous years. Some notable experts were absent, but Lesley and Catrin did a fine job looking after us and we visited interesting churches and saw a few gems.

Ever since I was an art student in the early '80s I was told to take a sketchbook and draw! Old habits die hard, and I draw because it helps me learn from the masters and commit the piece to memory – increasingly needed these days. I prefer to focus on one detail, which I sketch with a pen (so no rubbing out) and then add watercolour. I may continue to develop it from a photo snapped on my phone.

My current artistic concerns are with storytelling – how does an artist use the subject's postures and expressions, the details in the background, lettering and so on to tell a story? The standard bearer at St Gothards Pass from the first church we visited reminded me of Rik Mayall as Lord Flasheart, brimming with confidence, while in the background tiny figures push pack-horses along a dangerous path.

