

LONDON CITY WALK

On one of those baking days last summer that now seem but a distant and fond memory, around thirty-odd individuals gathered for a walking tour of glass in the City of London. We were led by Alf Fisher, who had evidently been very busy in these parts, and met at the Guildhall to start with a quick peek at the crypt. Here a fine collection of heraldic windows was on display, with examples by Brian Thomas, and Arthur Buss of G & G; then on to the Main Hall to look at some Whitefriars and Alf Fisher windows, on the themes of William Caxton (detail right) and the Great Fire of London, to name but two.

Around the corner at St Mary le Bow, left a shell by WWII bombing, John Hayward described in detail, accompanied by his designs and drawings, his commission to replace the ruined Victorian glass in the 1960s, for which he was paid the princely sum of £8 a square foot! Afterwards we strolled along eerily empty weekend City streets to Carpenters' Hall by the London Wall, opened up for us especially to view windows by Alf (detail top right), with the arms and symbols of the City, a Lawrence Lee and much old armorial glass. Alf related how his window was blown out in another bomb blast not long after installation – this one by the IRA in the seventies – and the struggle to match his original semiopaque orange-amber background in the subsequent restoration.

We paused briefly at St Katherine Cree, a Laudian Revival church that had escaped the Fire of London, and whose rose window (c 1630) was possibly modelled on the one at St Pauls. Historians have said there was no coloured glass available at that time – but here is a wealth of reds, turquoises and deep blues!

A short walk took us to St Ethelburga's, another church that largely escaped damage in WWII, only to be devastated in 1993 by the Bishopsgate bomb. The new East window (right) by Helen Whittaker AMGP includes fragments from the old 1878 Kempe window, and depicts St Ethelburga, a seventh-century abbess.

Finally a bus ride over the river to Southwark, where the stalls of Borough market provided for an impromptu tree-shaded lunch. Refreshed, we ducked into the last port of call, and were rewarded with a varied selection including a Henry Holliday, many Kempes and a 1959 Lawrence Lee. My own favourites here were the Shakespeare memorial window, with a splendid Bottom, Ariel and other friends from the plays; the La Farge 'Harvard window' commemorating its Southwark-born founder (see p 1); and, finally, Benn Finn's fine bay window in the Library (detail right), with text from T S Eliott and Thames scenes in etched blues and reds.

A memorable day - thanks Alf & John!

