

Surrey day out with Peter Batts, 31 May 2008

Peter Batts arranged a packed and fascinating day looking at churches in the Leatherhead and Ashstead area. Meeting up at the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady and St Peter at Leatherhead, we were generously entertained to coffee by the local parishioners. In the church we saw an impressive selection of glass. The church was built in the 1920s, benefiting from the generosity of Sir Edward Hulton (remember *Picture Post*?), whose wife was a Catholic. Seven of the windows were by Paul Woodroffe, an Arts & Crafts artist, and pupil of Christopher Whall. Particularly memorable were his glowing golden quarries. One of these windows featured on the 1992 Christmas postage stamps. The west window, slightly obscured by a gallery, is especially striking. Two more very recent windows were by Caroline Benyon – one of them the Millennium Window, depicting the Blessed Trinity. By the same artist is the Jordan Window in the Sacred Heart Chapel. In the baptistery is a window of Norman Slab glass. The visit was enhanced by seeing the Opus Sectile reredos of 1902 by Powell's.

After lunch we moved on to Ashstead, to visit the Church of St Giles. Here we saw a wide range of 16th-century glass, from Herckenrode Abbey, suppressed by Napoleon in 1801. In the sanctuary was a window by Arild Rosenkrantz – quite different to his famous window at Wickhambreaux.

Then on to Stoke d'Abernon, probably more famous for its brasses. After World War II the rector was able to obtain a large collection of continental glass, mainly Flemish, including some from the now ruined Costessey Park in Norfolk. This can be seen in the east window. Some of this glass was religious, some secular. In the Norbury Chapel is some fine heraldic glass, mostly of the Lords of Stoke, whose name changed seven times owing to female inheritance.

Finally we visited St Nicholas Church at Great Bookham. Here we saw more glass from the Costessey Collection, also acquired in the 1950s. These are a series of Types and Anti-Types, much as in the Medieval glass in Canterbury, with Old Testament scenes prefiguring New Testament ones.

Our thanks to Peter for such a well-organized day. Everything was smooth and well-presented: plenty of information, but not too schoolmasterly!

Robin Fleet

