

Review: 2018 touring conference in Oxfordshire



It was a balmy end-of-summer afternoon when we rolled up at New College, Oxford for the 2018 conference. The name is a misnomer – it is one of the oldest colleges, built 1380–86. After registering we headed to its Chapel to view its renowned 14C glazing scheme commissioned by William Wykeham, Chancellor to Edward III and Richard II. The work of Thomas Glasier of Oxford, the 11 huge figures with elaborate architectural canopies above are painted with masterly skill, in subtle shades of olives and purple-reds with abundant silver stain, their robes adorned with flying dragons and fighting cocks, their facial expressions gentle and mysterious, and their hair in bold corkscrew curls. The figures in the later (18C) windows stand in marked contrast. Five in the choir are by William Price the Younger, installed by William Peckitt (1735–40). In late Baroque style, the figures painted in vivid enamels on a grid of rectilinear white glass to emulate oil painting appear almost vulgar. In quieter tones are the other enamel windows of the same period. One by William Raphael Egington (son of Frances) window (1820–34) is moodily subtle – reminiscent of his father's style. The West window (1778–83), by Thomas Jervais after a design by Sir Joshua Reynolds, is also in finely painted enamels. It depicts a Nativity in dark, sombre tones



above, with the Virtues below it (detail above). The window's installation provoked immediate controversy. Sir Horace Walpole criticized the pale, 'washy Virtues', while Lord Torrington called them 'half-dressed languishing Harlots'. For myself, I rather admire the subtle silvery shades, the ghostly half-suggestions of Gothic ruins and delicate figures in poses sometimes reminiscent of Classical sculpture.

On Thursday, a coach tour of Oxfordshire churches began at St James, Radley, where the 1839 glazing scheme is by Thomas Willement, with some early 16C German/Netherlandish insertions and reproductions of Tudor coats of arms set into 'purposefully antiquated' 19C glazing. In the West window is a panel (possibly Georgian) of King Henry VII (below left), based on Hans Holbein's lost Whitehall portrait. The scheme was commissioned by Sir George Bowyer (1811–83), who was a member of Oxford Society for the Study of Gothic Architecture, of which Thomas Willement was an Honorary Member. Bowyer was heavily influenced by the European Gothic style – hence his desire to 're-Gothicize' Radley Church. A few years after, records note that Bowyer donated to nearby Radley College a window that 'had been at Willement's' (which suggested Willement kept a stock of pseudo-antique glazing) depicting six Tudor arms in the style of those at Radley Church. (Other similar arms, scattered across the country, described as being of 16C origin were manufactured either by Willement or, more likely, by his associates/subcontractors.)

All Saints, North Moreton, the next stop, contains late 13C stained glazing. Its Chapel of St Nicholas, also known as Stapleton's Chantry, was completed by 1299, the donor being Sir Miles de Stapleton. Although much original stained glass survives, it has sadly suffered from deliberate iconoclasm. Charles Winston, visiting in 1856, noted the bad state of the chapel window. Comparing it with the drawings of North Moreton and other comparable glass made 30 years earlier by Thomas Ward Snr when he was restoring the medieval glass at Wragby Church on the Nostell Priory Estate, Winston considered the original design could be restored by combining the drawings and the existing fragments of glass, and he supervised the window's restoration by Thomas



Ward Jnr (1808–70) at a cost of £27. However, some pieces of glass ended up in the wrong position and some were inserted inside-out or upside-down!

On wettravelling to St Frideswide, Frilsham, where I particularly liked the two windows by Joseph E. Nuttgens – one depicting St Frideswide (1934, detail above), and the other titled 'Annunciation, Madonna & Child, Visitation' (1945). Nuttgens was an immigrant from Germany who had studied stained glass under Arthur Anselm Orr, and then Karl Parsons and Alfred J. Drury at Central School, where he was introduced to Christopher Whall and his circle. At the time of WWI he was working at Lowndes & Drury's Glass House in Fulham, assisting Parsons and other artists. Afterwards he had moved to Chipping Campden to work for Paul Woodroffe.

After lunch, a treat awaited us at Bradley College, a delightful timber-ceilinged building by the architect Benjamin Woodward that contained three early windows designed by Edward Burne-Jones (1857–8) and made by James Powell & Sons, the themes being 'Adam & Eve', 'The Building of the Tower of Babel' and 'Solomon meeting the Queen of Sheba' (detail below). Burne-Jones had been given the job after James Powell had asked the architect to approach





Dante Gabriel Rossetti to find a talented young artist who could design a window because the firm aspired to improve the artistic quality of its stained glass. Rossetti's recommendation was Burne-Jones, whose earliest design for stained glass had 'driven Ruskin wild with joy'. Powell's bill for the total cost of the three windows came to just in excess of £84. The stained glass was commissioned and paid for by the College founder Thomas Stevens (1811–88), the Rector and Lord of the Manor of Bradfield.

At our next stop, St Mary The Virgin, Bucklebury, the East window (1912) and those in the chancel were designs by Frank Brangwyn (1867–1956, detail above) made up by James Silvester Sparrow, who had worked at Clayton & Bell before setting up own studio in Chiswick, where he designed and made his own windows as well as designs by Walter Crane. As well as the Brangwyn windows, on the North side of the aisle is a charming 17C glass sundial.

Onward to St Mary (EC), East Hendred, where most of the glazing system is by John Hardman & Co (1864–79). The striking East window (detail below) was designed by Herbert Hendrie (1886–1946) and made by Lowndes & Drury (1924). Born and brought up in Lancashire, Hendrie studied at Manchester School of Art before moving to London, where he was listed in the 1911 Census as an art student boarding with the painter John George Cogle (1875–1957), who was

then teaching at the Battersea Polytechnic. So Hendrie possibly studied there before his time at the Slade School and then the RCA where his teachers included Karl Parsons and WR Lethaby. The East Hendred window was made at the Fulham Glass House where he worked after WWI.

At St Mary, Longworth the East window, on the theme of 'Christ the True Vine' (below) was designed by George Maunoir Heywood Sumner (1843–1940) and made by James Powell & Sons. It features the firm's specially selected glass - witness the stunning shades and textures in Christ's robe. Sumner knew the art metal designer WAS Benson and through him met William Morris. An early Master of the Art Workers' Guild, Sumner was a versatile designer also working in a wide range of other media including textiles, wallpapers and tapestries.

Our final visit of the tour was to St Leonard, Sunningwell, which has an East Window (1877) designed by Hugh Arthur Kennedy (1854–1905) together with architect



John Pollard Seddon (1826–1906) and made by the Westminster firm Belham & Co. Kennedy had attended the Slade School of Art studying under Edward Poynter. It is not known how he met Seddon, but his skills as a figurative artist would have appealed to the architect, who had criticized trends in glasspainting during the 1870s in a correspondence with William Morris. As a result, Seddon had sought out more richly coloured and interestingly textured glass to use in the window - which was developed by Jesse Rust, a chemist then living in Battersea. Rust's glass colours in this window - particularly the intense blues of the starry night sky, the rich rubies and the amber-browns (detail above) - glow with an extraordinary, bubbling intensity ... mmmm!



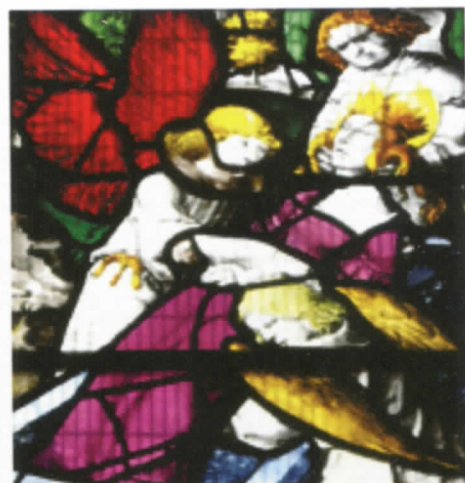


Day 2 was devoted to Oxford Colleges. It began at Worcester College Chapel, built in a vaguely classical style in 1791 and redecorated in the 1860s by architect William Burges (1827–81), who initially approached John Everett Millais to design the stained glass. However, Burges thought the designs unsuitable, and so went to the young Henry Holiday (1839–1927), who produced an elaborate scheme for painted decoration in Renaissance style, along with stained glass. Holiday's windows (detail above), made by Lavers & Barraud in 1864–65, reveal his growing repudiation of Gothic Revival style in favour of a cleaner, more modern look.

At our next stop, St Peter's College, with as its chapel the former parish church of St Peter-le-Bailey (designed in 1874 by Basil Champneys), we found another window by Holiday. Originally the East window, but later moved to the West, this 1874 work was made by Heaton, Butler & Bayne and depicted 'Christ with Apostles'. Its replacement is a 1964 design by John Hayward, but retaining Holiday's tracery lights. The central theme is St Peter with keys and the tower of Rochester Cathedral, surrounded by imagery associated with the College and its first Principal, former Bishop of Rochester (detail below), including bombers, his Military Cross and artificial leg (which prompted much searching!) Other symbols relate to his twin Noel, with whom he competed in the 1908 Olympic Games (spot the Olympic symbol), killed in the Great War. A south

chancel lancet is by Hungarian-born Ervin Bossanyi, who designed and made it as a personal project in 1943. It was installed in the chapel in 1997, gifted by the Bossanyi Estate as a memorial to the artist and his wife. Its theme is 'In His hands the seed will grow'. It is typical of Bossanyi's use of stylized gestures and ornament, reflecting his interest in traditional folk art.

The third port of call, Balliol College, was founded in the 13C and also one of the oldest. The chapel, rebuilt on the site of an early 16C building in 1856–57, was designed by William Butterfield. It contains the remains of one window of an earlier date than the chapel itself – which belonged to the library but looked into the chapel's west end – given by Thomas Chace, Master of Balliol 1412–28. Its remaining fragments include figures of Thomas Chace and College Fellows kneeling. Six more panels, all in fairly good condition, depict the life of St Catherine. Much of the present Chapel's 16C original glazing, given by Richard Stubbs (then Master of the college) and his brother Richard, survives and exemplifies high-status glazing of this period (detail above right). The East window is the most substantially intact; notably, there are 12 scenes of the Passion, some in good condition but some filled in with pieces from other windows. One window on the North side has three panels of different dates; on the left is a very beautiful one of 1529 or 1530, showing the Virgin adoring her Infant Son, over whom hovers a



golden-winged cherub. Other panels depict two angels, kneeling figures of Lawrence and Richard Stubbs, and St Lawrence and St Richard. Although probably painted in England, the 16C panels show the influence of Continental glasspainters: the artist used the designs from Durer's engraving *Passion* in two of the scenes – the Agony in the Garden and the Ecce Homo – while in one or two of the others the influence of Durer is evident. (The use of Durer's designs in stained glass was quite common on the Continent, but not in England.) In 1912 the 16C glazing was repaired and restored by Hugh Arnold, who described scheme and recorded his work in a booklet.

The Chapel also contains windows by Abraham Van Linge (brother of Bernard van Linge) from East Frisia, who arrived in London in 1621. The work here dates from 1637 and is typical of the Van Linge brothers' bold painting in vitreous enamels on white glass, with the leading largely in a rectilinear grid. The window on the North side told the story of St Philip and the Eunuch, and of that on the South side the sickness and recovery of King Hezekiah. When the old chapel was pulled down and the present one built, these were cut in two vertically and placed in different openings in the new building.

Our last visit before lunch was to Oriel College Chapel, which contains some late medieval glazing and windows by William Peckitt (1767). Peckitt's theme was 'The Presentation in the Temple' – the aged prophet Simeon holds the infant Christ, while the sceptical rabbis are depicted looking on (detail below). There are turtle doves, which are part of the purification rite at the temple following the birth of a male child (in this case Jesus). A decorative pattern in Rococo style





represents the Hebrew script of the accompanying text. The glass has not weathered particularly well, however and because of the decay when viewed close up the painting has the appearance of watercolour.

The major glazing scheme, dating from Sir TG Jackson's refurbishment of the Chapel in the 1880s, comprises six windows designed by Harry Ellis Wooldridge (1845–1917), made by James Powell & Sons (1885). Another 19C window is by Clayton & Bell (c.1870). There is also one 20C window – a Cardinal Newman memorial – designed by Vivienne Haig and realized by Douglas Hogg FMGP, installed in the restored Newman Oratory in 2001. Cardinal Newman (1801–90) was one of the most renowned figures associated with Oriel: he was a College Fellow from 1822 to 1845, and also served as the College Chaplain. The window depicts the Virgin Mary, (the College's patron saint) flanked by angels and Oriel's founders Edward II and Adam de Brome. Also visible are the arms of the King, the College, and the University, together with roundels below depicting the interior of the University Church and of Newman's church at Littlemore. Below this sits Newman, also accompanied by angels.

After lunch, we walked on to Merton College, founded in 1262 and one of the earliest



Oxford colleges, containing internationally important surviving 13C glass. The Chapel retains its original choir glazing (1310–11), gifted by Henry de Mamesfield, Fellow of Merton (1288–96) and University Chancellor, whose importance is reflected by his appearance in 12 of the 14 choir windows. As Tim Ayers demonstrated, the glass came from Thomas Glasier's workshop in Thame, Oxfordshire. The glazing scheme has characteristic 'banding' formed by richly painted colourful figures in the central areas and above and below clear grisaille patterns filled with natural forms. The designs comprise single central figures under elaborate canopies; my favourite was one of the Virgin with a puzzled expression and a hairstyle rather like a 70s punk (top left)! In 1861 Philip Webb made detailed drawings of this glass, which he used as the basis for his designs at All Saints, Selsley, Glos. The painted ceiling decorations by Pollen (1850s) form an interesting connection with the Pre-Raphaelites: during the painting JE Millais made use of Pollen's scaffolding to sketch details of the 1300s glazing, which subsequently appear in his famous 1851 painting 'Mariana'.

Off again to University College, largely built in the 17–18C. The chapel has eight 1641 windows depicting Old and New Testament subjects, including a fabulous Jonah and the Whale (detail below left) painted by Abraham van Linge (fl. 1625–41), in the period just preceding the English Civil War (as a result of which the English stained glass tradition was relatively eclipsed). The chapel was restored in 1862 by the firm of Michael O'Connor (1801–67), whose son Arthur O'Connor made the new East window, designed by another son, William O'Connor. Its theme is the Life and Passion of Christ.

Our final visit was St Edmund Hall, where the library was converted from a 12C parish church (St Peter-in-the-East). As well as fragments of medieval glass, it contains remnants of 15C glass in the remains of the north transept. Its 1837 East window is the work of John Absalom Edwards (1793–1850). Thomas Willement made the two 1839 single-light antique-looking windows of St Peter and St Paul in the south transept. Signed 'TW', they are remarkably successful reproductions of medieval glass.

Our optional Saturday visit was to Christ Church, which contains a particularly varied and interesting collection of stained glass, much of it of exceptional quality. The oldest stained glass in the hall, dating from the 1520s, can be seen in the West window and the upper parts of the oriel window on the south side. The Becket window (1520) commemorates the murder of the Archbishop. Three windows in the Latin Chapel contain mid 14C glass; the subjects are St Catherine, the Virgin and Child and St Hilda. Alongside are the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Annunciate. A third window depicts St Margaret, St Frideswide and St Catherine. A collection of 15–17C glass includes the arms of four 15C deans and canons of Christ Church, Cardinal Wake's badge, the Virgin and Child, St Jerome (including a lion's paw!), and Pilate washing his hands.

Later windows, painted on clear glass with enamel colours, are by the Van Linge brothers, whose work we had seen in other Oxford chapels, and two of their complete windows survive here. One depicts Bishop



Robert King, the first Bishop of Oxford (1542–57), with the remains of Osney Abbey behind him (c. 1630). The other depicts Jonah, sitting under a tree contemplating the city of Nineveh. His clothing is the only pot metal glass in the entire window.

The Frideswide window (1859) in the Lady Chapel is an exemplary early window by Edward Burne-Jones, who (then aged 25) had just started designing for James Powell. It depicts the legend of Oxford's patron saint as a series of small panels. The scenes reveal her pursuit by the local Lord Algar after she refused to wed him, taking refuge in a pigsty, her prayers to provide a healing well, and her death surrounded by her companions with background details such as plates on the dresser and a loo (photo above). In the tracery above it is a round window with the ship of souls conveyed by angels to heaven, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Tree of Life and angels holding the sun, the moon and the stars. Unfortunately the person charged with making the measurements was extremely ill at the time, and made an error such that the designs presented to Powells had to be reduced to fit into the space available. The result was that each fitted panel was smaller and more crowded than Burne-Jones envisaged; he was so unhappy with the final window he offered to pay for another window. Luckily, however, his offer was refused – so preserving this unique example of his early work. It is very different from his later works – four of which (dating to the 1870s, made by the Morris Co) can be compared in this building. The Vyner Memorial window (1872) are depicted the figures of Samuel, David, John the Evangelist and Timothy. Other windows depict St Cecilia (1874), St Catherine (1878) and Hope, Charity and Faith (1871) (detail below).

A quick check of my timepiece revealed I was in danger of missing my train, so I bid the Morris angels farewell and hurried off, my journey buoyed up by their exquisite beauty.

Chris Wyard

