

Review: Bath and the Levels touring conference

Orchardleigh-medieval angel



Our conference began on the evening of our arrival with a presentation by Holy Well members Jack Clare, Sarah Knighton and Clare Mardall on 'Bishop Fox and the conservation of the north presbytery stained glass'

Day 1 The tour, with guides Steve Clare, Peter Cormack and Tony Benyon, started at Coleford Holy Trinity, built 1830–31 by GP Manners of Bath. Its E window and one in the S Nave are by Jones & Willis (1912). Others are mid 19C by the Horwood Bros, moved from Mells, based on medieval print figures. In the S nave is a 1958 Keith New window of Saul and David with harp in a dark, broody colour scheme. Peter explained it was an early independent work as he was moving towards abstraction, but with recognizable figures and with remnants of the A&C tradition in the leading (unlike his later completely abstract work at Bristol and Cambridge). The subtle stippling he had learnt from Lawrence Lee whilst at Coventry.

Next was Orchardleigh St Mary, a 13C gem set in manor house grounds owned by the Champney family since the 15C.

Orchardleigh- St Matthew (detail)-



In the 19C a 'Regency Gothic' style chapel was added and Sir George Gilbert Scott and son restored it. The medieval glass was probably brought in by Thomas Champney at this time. It comprises 8 of a series of 12 Apostles (1440–50), possibly made in Bristol (example below left); the remaining 4 were reputedly destroyed by a gamekeeper's shot. In the E window (late 15C) is an abbot in vestments, possibly St Augustine, with Anglo-Netherlandish style angels. The W window depicts a king and an abbot, who has been given a doctor's cap instead of a mitre, and a St Michael. Steve Clare described their restoration, and Peter described the 1880 Clayton & Bell rearrangement.

Mells St Andrew is in 15–16C Perpendicular style with survivals of the 15C glazing in the traceries, but much restored in the 19C, with most windows in neo-Gothic style by the local Horwood Bros studio. In the chapel, a Sir William Nicholson (1930) window of St Francis and animals (below), his only stained

Mells, W Nicholson, St Francis (detail)



glass work, was made at The Glass House, London. Tony Benyon related the history of the Mells studio and the role of Nicholson's assistant Barbara Batt, a Central School student who had worked with Karl Parsons. The local Horner family were friends of Edward Burne-Jones and there is a tapestry and plaque by him, and a statue by Sir Alfred Munnings, with other work by Luytens and Eric Gill.

After lunch we headed for another St Andrew, at Trent on the Somerset-Dorset border. Dating back to the 13C, but mostly 14–15C, the church has a well-known collection of pre-Reformation carved pew ends with figures of people, beasts and birds. In the E window is a fine array of 16–17C glass from Europe (Rouen, St Gallen, Wettingen, Lucerne and Cologne) (above right) that William Turner, Reverend 1835–75, brought back from Europe and had Thomas Willement install (later rearranged by AK Nicholson,

Trent, E window continental glass (detail)



who also designed the E memorial window of the military saints George, Martin and Michael in the N chapel). The W window is also by Willement (1842) and contains fragments of ancient glass at the top. The E window glass had recently been restored by Holy Well Glass, and Steve Clare detailed their work. The top-left panel of Christ in the Garden was from Rouen and had heavy encrustation especially on Christ's head, which they cleaned up. They also found design problems while considering moving the original glass inward to add a protective layer: in the traceries the cusps were very deep and couldn't be brought forward without cutting the glass, so they left it in situ and added a protective layer on the exterior. In Nicholson's grisaille, they found they could lift each panel separately to clean in between the glass.

All Saints at Langport, a hilltop 15–16C church overlooking Benedictine abbey ruins, was our last stop. It has Somerset's biggest collection of medieval glass in the E window and the N chancel traceries (below), restored in the 19C by John Dando Sedding and then by Clayton & Bell, who also made windows in the S transept and aisle. Some of C&B's inserted quarries had lost their paint.

Langport: medieval glass (detail)





The figures include male and female saints including St James Major and Minor. Steve Clare, who had cleaned them, pointed out the characteristic Somerset patterns in the grisaille and the treatment of the figures' haloes as 'suns of speldour'. Central in the top row is a Virgin in an unusual red robe. Below are St Lawrence with gridiron, Antony plus pig and Joseph of Arimathea with cruet. On the S side are windows by the O'Connors, Lavers & Barraud and Alexander Gibbs, on the N a 1904 Powell window and one at the W end by AK Nicholson/GER Smith. Peter pointed out the ruby mosaic in the 1860s O'Connors window, and the unusual turquoises and pinks (above).

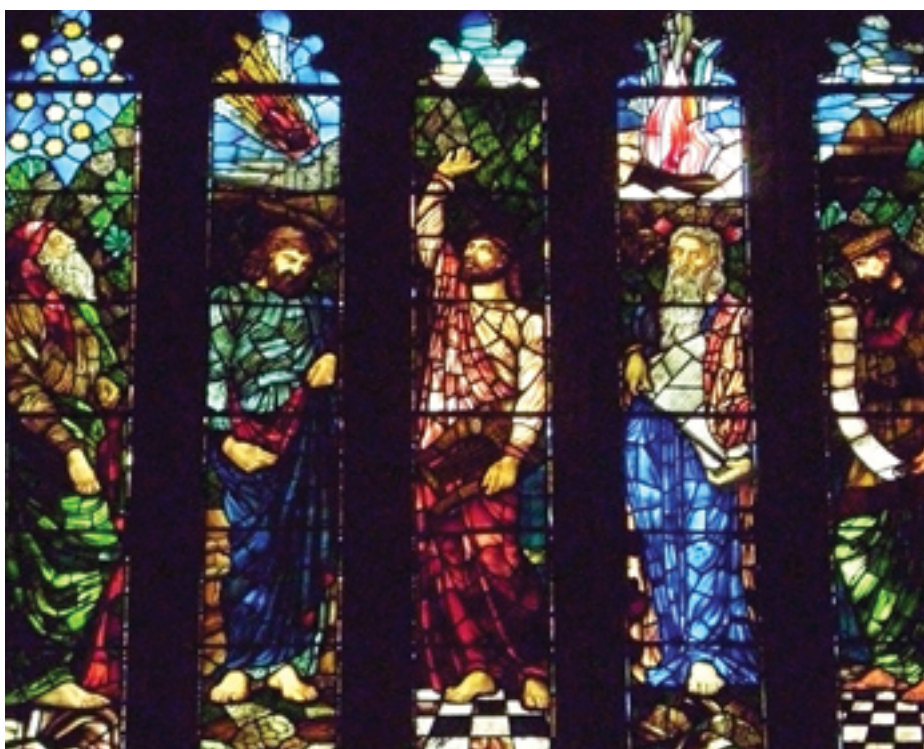
The stunning W 1877 window (below), of the prophets Abraham, Job, David, Moses and Solomon, is designed by Hugh Arthur Kennedy, who also chose the glass, made for him by Jesse Rust. Kennedy was a forerunner of Whall, a pupil of Ruskin, and there are echoes of Burne-Jones in his angels at the top of the window. On the church exterior are some great gargoyles, known as 'Hunky Punks' by the locals.

Day 2 We set off the next day for St Laurence at East Harptree, a church built 12–15C with some original features. A late 19C restoration begun by JD Sedding was then taken over first by JT Mickelthwaitte, then Somers Clarke. Though there is no existing medieval glass, there are chancel windows by Clayton & Bell (1880) and three N aisle windows by Burlison & Grylls (1918), a firm originally set up to make windows for the architect Bodley. The outstanding window is a 1920–21 war memorial in the S aisle in memory of the local men who died in WWI, showing SS Lawrence with gridiron, George with sword and dragon (right) and Agnes carrying a palm and a lamb; at the base are the women waving off their menfolk. It is by Karl Parsons, on whose history Peter elaborated. Karl had been apprentice to Christopher Whall when the latter was working on the Gloucester Cathedral windows. Beatrice, his older sister, was working in Whall's studio and had got Whall to take on her teenage brother. Karl went on to work on the Cape Town windows, and later in 1908 set up on his own at The Glass House. There, in the A&C tradition, he would have designed and drawn the cartoons, then chosen the glass and painted it himself. He much admired the older artists Rossetti and Burne-Jones, and was well aware of the importance of leading as part of the design – as exemplified by the briar rose design at the base of St Agnes. Her veil is probably 'Davis blue' – a shade made at Powells for Louis Davis. There is much use of acidified flash glass – e.g. green in the leaves above Agnes, and red in St George's flag. The window makes good use of expertly leaded slab glass, in which the convex surface concentrates light and the uneven thickness, which



you can spot on the exterior, affords colour variation. Steve, who had done a condition report, said that this unevenness posed structural challenges, as concentration of weight in places led to collapse and movement. A lack of horizontal support bars around the bottom Christ figure had also caused movement. His solution was to support this area without adding horizontal bars across the figure. There was also some water ingress, though this could be corrected without releading, and an issue with gloss paint applied over the stonework, which needed cleaning.

The next church, St Peter and St Paul at Kilmersdon, also had some great A&C glass, designed by Louis Davis (below).



This 1914 E window in the N aisle was, Peter thought, probably painted by James Powell as Davis's own style was much more graphic than that here, with its scratchy paintwork and heavier leading. At the time Davis was working closely with the firm, and a good range of their streaky whites and rich colours can be seen in the glass. The angels at the top are like those in Davis's famous 1910–15 Dunblane window. There is also an influence of William Blake and Whall in the design.

There is other work here by the Powell firm. An Annunciation in the S aisle by Powell is derived from a painting by Beatrice Parsons. Three windows are designed by Henry Holiday: a 'Faith, Hope and Charity' (1880) (below) and a further two in the N aisle (1886, 1890). The style of the poses and drapery was inspired by Classical Greek designs, which he had studied before drawing the cartoons.

Winscombe, William Burges, King David (c. 1863) (detail)



Wells, 16C glass from Rouen (detail)



Kilmersdon, Henry Holiday, Faith, Hope and Charity (1880) (detail)



Onward to Wells Cathedral, where lunch was in the Vicars Hall. It dates back to about 1348, and high in the windows are panels of 14–15C saints.

Back in the cathedral, the 1340–45 Jesse Tree E window in the quire is arguably the star. This fine 7-light window of Christ's genealogy is known as 'The Golden Window' owing to its unusual colour palette of greens and golds. In the centre is Mary in a green robe. Above is the Last Judgement and The Crucifixion, with a green cross to represent the Tree of Life; on either side are figures of saints. Steve's team restored it some 5 years ago, when he gave a detailed talk on the project. (This was an AWG lecture in 2014, a summary of which is available on our website, under 'Newsletter'.) The window is a part of one of the major English collections of medieval stained glass, dating back to the 13C. There is more in the Lady Chapel – such as two lights showing Eve tempted by the Serpent, restored by Willement (1845) (below). Many lower windows were damaged by Parliamentarians in 1642–3, and are now jumbled.

In St Katherine's Chapel are a number of early 16C panels from Rouen (above), brought to Wells in the 19C. All except one depict stories from the 13C book *'The Golden Legend'*. Further along the S side is an interesting collection of small medieval panels (below).



Later glass includes windows by Lavers, Barraud & Westlake, AK Nicholson, CE Kempe and James Powell with designs by JW Brown and Charles Hargrave.

After this complete glass overload, it was time to stroll down to the bottom of town to the new Holy Well studio, set in the premises of an old watermill. There, over a reviving cup of tea, we viewed some of the exciting projects currently on the team's workbenches.

Chris Wyard

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Our last stop before lunch was St James the Great, Winscombe. a 14–15C building with considerable surviving original glazing. It had been reset in the mid 19C by William Warrington. It is possible he also refired some of it, as the left side of the E window has some areas of very dark 'hot stain'.

There is also a 16C N chancel window given by the vicar Dr Carsleggh, bearing his monogram. The E window is a design by William Burges (c.1863), cartooned by Frederick Weeks (top centre). You can also find an 1890s window by Joseph Bell, a Bristol firm, in the S aisle, and others by Lavers, Barraud & Westlake.

Wells Lady Chapel, Serpent tempting Eve (detail)

