

## Centenary events: 2021



### Exhibition to mark the Centenary of the Society

As part of an exciting year of events to mark our Centenary in 2021, members of the British Society of Master Glass Painters are invited to make a panel, or series of panels, to celebrate the event. Each panel should measure 30 cm x 30 cm excluding the frame. There is no theme and no restriction on techniques or materials, provided glass is involved.

We intend to launch a virtual exhibition space on our website to showcase the panels, which will be extensively promoted through social media. There is no charge for entering the virtual exhibition and all work should be new, created specially for the centenary year.

Apart from the virtual exhibition, we are also in discussion with potential exhibition venues including cathedrals and galleries for a series of exhibitions to mark the centenary. There will be a hanging fee for any work selected for our flagship exhibitions. LED light boxes will be provided as part of the hanging fee, which will give us great flexibility in selecting exhibition venues.

We also encourage you to investigate local venues so stained glass can be exhibited across the British Isles during our celebrations.

Email your exhibition entries to [portfolio@bsmgrp.org.uk](mailto:portfolio@bsmgrp.org.uk) by 31st December 2020 and ensure images are at least 300 dpi. Include, in this order, Name, Title, Media/Techniques, and up

to 40 words about your inspiration.

We hope that you enjoy the challenge of creating new work and we look forward to seeing the results of your creativity.

## Videos wanted!

On the Society website from next month we will be featuring videos of artist or conservator members making/talking about their work in their studio, on site or at exhibitions. If you are interested in sharing your work with others on our website, send your video to the Secretary, Chris Wyard. (Council members can perform any necessary video editing if you do not have any video-editing software.)

Videos should be in mp4 format and can be sent to [secretary@bsmgrp.org.uk](mailto:secretary@bsmgrp.org.uk) using WeTransfer or a similar large-file transfer system.

## Reviews

### Spring lecture: John Edwards 'Christopher Webb – popular, prolific, profound'

AWG, 13 March



Hove, Sussex, St Andrew 1927

The audience was slightly depleted as we were but three days away from the coronavirus lockdown, but those who did attend were treated to an absorbing and well-constructed lecture on a stained glass artist who has greatly interested our speaker, a canon in the Church of England (see 'Scenes from everyday life: Christopher Webb's Benedicte windows' in *JSG* 42, 2018). Unfortunately, Henry Hinchcliffe could not be present but a proof copy of his new book on Webb, to which John contributed an Appendix, was on display. Also on show was a number of

original design sketches and full-size cartoons, for which John is temporary custodian until a permanent home can be found for them.

Christopher Webb (1886–1966) came from a family of artists and architects so it was almost inevitable that he followed in their footsteps. After education at Rugby and a spell in the cultural centre of Nancy in France, he enrolled at the Slade where his drawing skills were quickly recognized. Indeed, it was this superb draughtsmanship which was to characterize his windows throughout his career. When, in 1909, he was apprenticed to Ninian Comper, he absorbed the Comper style and use of colour and that too had a considerable influence on Webb's designs. His first and only pre-WWI window at North Marsden, Bucks shows the Comper effect but interestingly there is no canopy work and this was to be a constant in Webb's work.

His career was interrupted by war service in the Artists' Rifles. Afterwards he probably shared a studio briefly with his brother Geoffrey, also a stained glass designer. The brothers never competed against each other, so much so that Christopher joined the BSMGP Council only after Geoffrey had resigned.

He then teamed up with architect WH Randall Blacking, also a Comper pupil, who was to become a life-long friend. From a studio in Guildford they collaborated on painted decoration for

churches, before Webb decided to specialize in stained glass. In 1926 he married and moved to St Albans, where he set up a studio in 1930 and he worked there until 1964, two years before he died.

Webb soon developed his own style, which precluded canopies, and included small delicate subordinate scenes enclosed in swirling tendrils, and plenty of clear glass. His main asset was his meticulous drawing, as in this 1937 example [below] of the Shepherds hurrying towards Bethlehem for a window at St Andrew, Hove, West Sussex. And he became successful; in the 5 years up to 1940 he was averaging 14 windows a year and in all he designed 426+ windows in 45 years.



St Andrew, Hove (detail)





Sutton Baptist Church (detail)



Webb worked closely with architects throughout his career, including the ground-breaking NF Cachemaille-Day, for whom, in 1934, he designed the Pilgrims Progress window in Sutton Baptist Church in Greater London. This depicts ten scenes from Part 1, including that of Christian, the Pilgrim, confronting the monster Apollyon [left]. At Wythenshawe, Manchester, in 1937, Webb produced one of his few semi-abstract designs, no doubt at the instigation of the architect.

Webb's collaboration with architect Cecil Brown culminated in the project to replace the windows of the bombed church of St Lawrence Jewry, which was left an empty shell following the 1940 blitz. In all, Webb supplied 13 very large windows, including the well-known Wren window.

Webb received many prestigious commissions including the chapel in Wolseley Palace, the residence of the Bishop of Winchester, St Albans Abbey and Sheffield Cathedral, where he designed the seven windows for the new Chapter House in 1939. He was to return to Sheffield in 1948 to design the magnificently crowded and multi-hued Te Deum window. This drawing [right] gives an indication of the vibrancy of the whole window.



Sheffield Cathedral (detail)

Webb is noted for both his Ascension and his Benedicte windows, examples of which are at Finchampstead, Berkshire in 1945 [Ascension, left] and at Denby, Derbyshire in 1961 [Benedicte, below].

Both illustrate a recurring theme in Webb windows: the depictions of scenes from ordinary life. In the Ascension there

is in a wreathed predella showing a two-horse team ploughing, with a scroll saying *Laborare est Orare* (To work is to pray).

In the Benedicte window, for which the cartoons exist, children enjoy themselves, playing cricket, skipping, sledging, bicycling and swimming.



Finchampstead (left); Denby: cartoon (above) and window (right, photo: Henry Hinchcliffe)



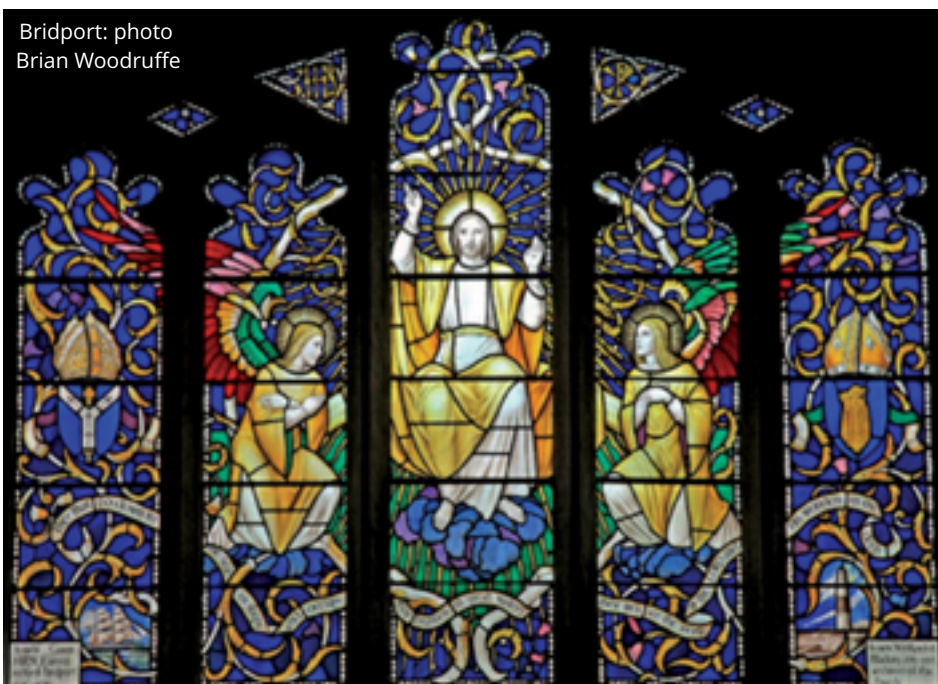




In 1954 he won the competition for one of his most famous commissions, the Shakespeare window in Southwark Cathedral. This is in the form of a secular Tree of Jesse springing from Shakespeare's tomb (left) and characters from the plays within the branches, including Bottom with elves [below left], Richard III [below centre] and Falstaff [below].



The Shakespeare window, details, Southwark Cathedral, London



Bridport: photo  
Brian Woodruffe

Towards the end of his career Webb's old friend Will Blacking died in 1958, so he designed this deeply coloured widow at Bridport, Dorset [left].

In summing up, John highlighted Webb's design skills and his colour selection, much less muted than his reputation might suggest. He had two excellent glass painters in Frank Pinnock and Tom Warden whose work he acknowledged in some signed windows.

I can only quote John's final thoughts: Webb was able to present complex theological ideas in ways that were easily understandable. Not only in his Benedicte windows, but perhaps most

conspicuously there, he brought Christian doctrine and belief down to earth, offering a vision of the interface between the divine and the human.

**Leslie Smith**

*Note:*

*John would be happy to send a pdf of the lecture to anyone who might be interested, particularly if they had intended to come but were unable to, or for any other reason. His email is [j7r7e7@gmail.com](mailto:j7r7e7@gmail.com) and his phone no 01344 774586.*