

# Event Reviews

**'Glass painters' lecture by Martin Harrison, AWG, 16 June 2023**



On June 16th more than forty BSMGP members and friends were able to assemble at The Art Worker's Guild to hear Martin Harrison, keen observer and renowned writer on so many ART and ART/Craft-connected subjects talking about 'Early Victorian Stained Glass'. Almost all of us know him from the brilliant book he wrote about a young, relatively unknown artist (Brian Clarke), which he completed in 1981 thus enabling Brian to gain the interest and, indeed, the enthusiasm of architects who had previously regarded 'Stained Glass' as a hopelessly outdated craft. Martin's ability to understand and portray artists and their art in a cogent manner also informed his later books, his most recent being 'Inside Francis Bacon'.

For us (about 50) members of the BSMGP, Martin's lecture gave us the

long-withheld enjoyment of physically existing for a while in the unique space of 'The Art Workers Guild', hearing and seeing the speaker and catching up with news while eating a picnic supper. Martin's talk covered the early years of stained-glass window making in England, an area of expertise mostly controlled by conservators rather than historians. The glass is still there, someone commissioned it, but certain knowledge of its aesthetic history and construction is missing. 'Who were these people?' as Martin put it!

His visuals were really very good. They were large and clear, beginning with the 14th-century window by 'Thomas Glazier of Oxford' who had worked for William of Winchester and Merton College. Moving on, Martin mentioned several other sites where this early glass could still be seen, and these included Long Melford church in Suffolk, the Beauchamp Chapel in Warwick and Clopton Church in Northamptonshire with its Flemish influence. Helpfully Martin focused on the important personalities, the influencers of the crafts, among them Robert Braithwaite Martineau, Charles Winston, George Hedgeland and William Burgess who were closely involved in new work for 'their' Churches.

Indeed, Burne-Jones worked out his own version of the 'Spirit of Medieval Piety' that he loved, for the windows at St Frideswide's Church, while William Burgess loved the clarity of the 13th century vision. Artist Henry Holiday's methods were quite different: a painter's personal representation of Biblical scenes and his fabricators Lavers & Barraud worked with him under his own close supervision. However, the role of the craftsmen was very insecure and in 1889, at the height of the enthusiasm for Church embellishment, a 'Glass Painters Union' was formed. While the 'Georgian' era was dominated by painters whose work could be rendered in glass (see Fulham Palace and New College Oxford), the High Victorian era's

white, aubergine, violet plus others in single colour or combinations. So members can avoid having to purchase from France or Germany at elevated prices.

EAG melt glass from raw materials in pelletised batch form, and distribute the batch in the UK to around 40+ glass companies and can also produce made-to-order Norman slabs. Details are at [www.englishantiqueglass.co.uk](http://www.englishantiqueglass.co.uk). You can order/enquire via email ([orders@englishantiqueglass.co.uk](mailto:orders@englishantiqueglass.co.uk)) and request images of specific colours or make an appointment; open Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5 pm. The address is: 21-22 Avenue One, Station Lane. Witney OX28 4XZ.

## EAG glass stocks

After publication of the new Red List of Endangered Crafts, with mouth-blown flat glass making listed as extinct and the knock-on effect on stained glass window making and conservation listed as endangered, we have since heard from English Antique Glass, who were keen to stress that they have a large stock of mouth-blown flat glass available. They have around 600 sheets of flat glass in stock with an average size of 0.35 m<sup>2</sup> comprising clear and creamy whites, streaky whites, streaky and flashed colours. The colour range includes amber, blue, green, pink, ruby, opal,

(left) 'Detail of the head of St John from a 'Pieta' in the Church of St Peter and St Paul, East Harling, Norfolk (15th Century); (below) 'Our Lady of Pity' in The Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford, Suffolk (15th Century); images from 'English Stained Glass' Thames & Hudson 1960



massive production of new work had been created by quite a limited number of 'Firms' who dominated the market, a burst of energy that had undoubtedly been encouraged by the fashion for stained glass 'memorials' for loved ones inside the church, rather than a stone memorial outdoors. Martin closed the story with some tales of female endeavour, as determined women began to create their own windows. These included Margaret Pearson (1743-1823) whose work can be seen in Fulham Palace and Emma Cons (1838-1912) who made windows with Powells' studio, before assisting with the founding of The Ladies Co-operative Art Guild. This was a tonic of a lecture and a stimulating start to holiday adventures that must surely involve visits to several or at least some of these fascinating early works by our hard-working ancestors in the craft.

**Caroline Swash**

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