

Notes on the Medieval Stained Glass at Winscombe and East Brent

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THE glass in the churches of Winscombe and East Brent forms a very interesting study.

The E. window of the N. aisle at East Brent is filled with richly coloured small scenes from the Passion of our Lord in a canopied framework of the usual early or mid-fifteenth-century type, but this glass is very largely a modern restoration.

The window beside it, together with the four at Winscombe containing old glass, belong to the latest period of medieval glass painting, and exhibit three stages in development. In all of them there are figures on simple quarry backgrounds, and there is a very evident attempt to keep the effect as light as possible. In the Winscombe aisle windows colour is introduced into the figures, but with great simplicity and restraint. In the Brent window of this type, viz. that on the N. side, colour has been avoided, save for yellow stain, of which very great use is made. The third stage is seen in the N. chancel window at Winscombe, where even the stain has almost disappeared from the figures themselves, which are principally in shaded pigment on white glass, giving a black and white or grisaille effect. This last window has a small amount of quite definitely renaissance canopy work at the head of each light, and the inscription proves that its date must be between 1520 and 1532; for although mutilated there is sufficient to show that it is a record connecting the window with Peter Carslyght or Carsleigh, vicar here from 1520 to 1532.

If we compare this glass with what we find of the same character in St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, and if we recollect the similar glass which can be found in the Bristol area,¹ we are tempted to surmise that it is of Bristol manufacture, and that its peculiarities represent the glass-painting tradition of that place, or rather the later tradition there, for there is earlier glass in the district, which was most probably made there also.

On comparing with this glass the beautiful glass which remains in the tracery of the E. window of the neighbouring church of Compton Bishop, we shall find that the latter is clearly earlier, but to a large extent of the same general type, in which there is a distinct avoidance of over-much colouring. At Compton Bishop the window tracery, while of an enriched Perpendicular type, is certainly earlier than that of the windows containing ancient glass at East Brent and Winscombe, while the glass itself has fourteenth-century characteristics, notably the graceful figures, slightly curved, and also the wide borders with which each tracery light is provided. These borders tended to become much smaller or even to disappear from tracery lights in West of England work latterly, and the form we see at Compton Bishop is characteristic of late fourteenth-century work. Yet the figures at Compton Bishop are entirely carried out in white and yellow stain like the much later work at East Brent, although there is another earlier characteristic in the coloured backgrounds.

Turning back now to the earlier window at Brent, the E. window of the N. aisle, we note that the colour treatment is entirely different and the scenes are in a canopy framework. At first sight these richly coloured scenes appear to belong to an earlier date, at any time in the first half of the fifteenth century. But the window which holds them is almost certainly later. The fact that the doorway in this N. aisle is not on the side but at the W. end suggests that the aisle is not earlier than the time of John de Selwode, Abbot of Glastonbury 1457-93, who built a large manor-house close to the N. side of the church. The proximity of this house would account for the unusual place of the doorway. Can this richly coloured glass, so

¹ E.g. at St. Katharine's (Batheaston), Farleigh Hungerford and Orchardleigh.

different in character, not only from the obviously late glass in the adjacent window, but also from the certainly earlier glass at Compton Bishop, be as late as the end of the fifteenth century? If so, did it come from the same place, which was probably Bristol? Were there two such different methods of glass painting practised in the same place at about the same period? Or is this glass earlier work re-used in a later window? Or is it from another locality where richly coloured glass of an earlier type may have held its ground till quite a late date?

The writer does not presume to answer these questions at present. Much more investigation, much careful comparison of surviving glass and fragments of glass in different areas in the West of England is needed before it will be possible to suggest any conclusions as to the origin and date of certain types of glass painting which are to be found in the wide area that may have been served either by Bristol or by Exeter. Glass of other types, some very unusual indeed, as at Sherborne, is to be found in the West of England: at Chewton Mendip there are remains of fifteenth-century glass different again, and at Selworthy is some later glass of perhaps 1540 of yet another kind, while the tracery there, known to have been built about 1538, and at Timberscombe, has contemporary glass of the normal white and yellow stain type. Was glass painting carried on at Wells or Glastonbury or Taunton? In St. John's, Glastonbury, are remains of fifteenth-century glass with very deep colouring: at Langport and at Trull, close to Taunton, there is glass of the quarry background type of the same kind as that at Winscombe. At Bampton some richly coloured fifteenth-century glass is most probably of Exeter origin. But this is all guess-work until much careful and laborious investigation and comparison have been carried out.

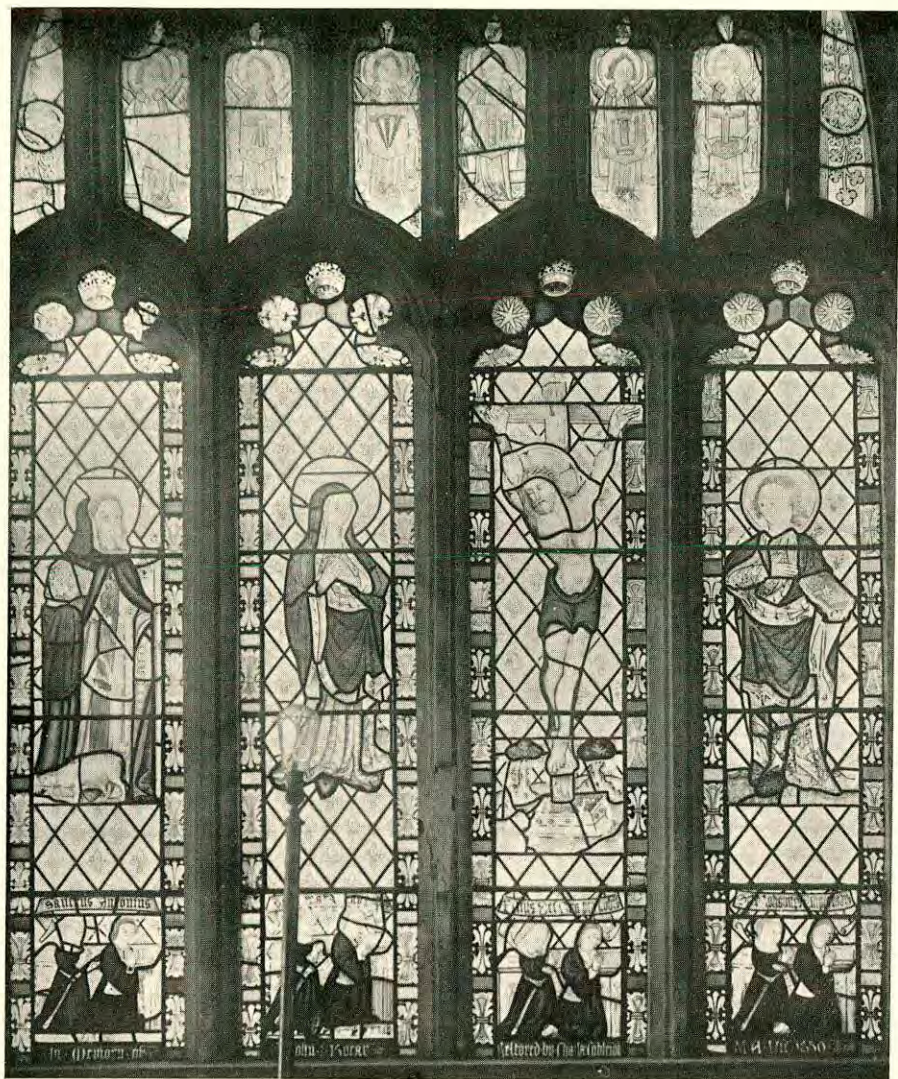
THE ANCIENT STAINED GLASS IN WINSCOMBE CHURCH

East window of north aisle.

Four lights cinquefoiled, with Perpendicular tracery in three panels of three lights each, with subordinate lights.

Tracery lights:

The upper row has a star, a rose, and a star; the next row



WINSCOMBE CHURCH
ANCIENT STAINED GLASS, E. WINDOW OF N. AISLE

From a Photograph by the Very Rev. Father E. Horne, F.S.A.

has water-flowers in yellow stain on white, growing out of mounds.

The lower row has a series of angels with gold wings, vested in appalled albes and amices, holding shields (which are also hung with gold bands round their necks) bearing instruments of the Passion, as follows, from left to right : (1) crown of thorns and spear ; (2) seamless robe and dice ; (3) three nails ; (4) hammer, ladder and pincers ; (5) pillar with scourges, one on either side ; (6) cross on a single step or base block.

Main lights :

These have single figures on a quarry background, and a pair of donors kneeling at the base of each light with a scroll over their heads. Round each light is a floral border of the usual type, with crowns, roses, fleurs-de-lys and suns in the cusps at the heads.

From left to right :

(1) St. Anthony. In white habit with black scapular, a blue cloak with hood over head. He holds a book in his right hand, in his left hand a rosary and a yellow staff with a bell hanging from the top. At his feet is a pig with a bell hanging from its neck.

Lower down, on a scroll : Sanctus : Antonius :¹

Beneath the scroll are two kneeling donors in blue, a man and a woman, facing right : the woman has a gold belt and a rosary, a purse hangs at the man's waist. Behind is a long desk or table with a panelled front on which rests an open book : this scene is repeated at the base of each light, with only minute variations.

(2) The Blessed Virgin Mary. In white dress ornamented with gold, under a red mantle which covers her head and is wound round her beneath her clasped hands.

Lower down, on a scroll : setā : mara (*sic*) ora p nobis
Donors below as in (1).

¹ These inscriptions are in black letter in the originals, with Lombardic capitals where capitals are given here.

- (3) Our Lord on the Cross. The head looks to the left and is inclined, the body somewhat curved, the loin cloth red. The blood from the wounds is shown in yellow stain. The cross stands upon a large step or base block with quatrefoil piercings round the sides, not unlike the base of a churchyard cross. On either side of this base is a diminutive tree growing out of a low mound.

Lower down, on a scroll, apparently modern work :

Filius (*sic*) : dei : Ora : pro : nobis

Donors below as in (1).

- (4) St. John. In white undergarment, with yellow flowers and a green pallium with a gold border over it. In his left hand a book, his right hand on his breast. He stands on the remains of a green mound.

Lower down, on a scroll, apparently modern work :

Scē Iohannes Ora pro nobis

Donors below as in (1).

Across the base of the window, in modern glass :

· In · Memory · of · / Iohn ∴ Rocar / Restored · by ·
Cha^s Ia^s Cobleigh / · M · A · Vic · 1850 · ^W Loñ.

This window has been very carefully repaired, and contains a certain amount of modern glass, evidently dating from 1850 ; the same is the case with the other windows. This includes the head of our Lord and the two inscriptions and the heads of the male donors in lights three and four, beside a very great deal of the background.

The absence of any mound in the case of the figure of the Blessed Virgin is due to the restoration : originally this figure must have had one.

Easternmost window on north side of north aisle.

Three lights cinquefoiled, ogee-headed, with Perpendicular tracery in two panels of three lights each, with subordinate lights.

Tracery lights, upper row, left to right (1) ihc, (2) M

Tracery lights, lower row, fragments.

Main lights :

These have single figures on a quarry background with the same general treatment as in the E. window of this aisle.

From left to right :

(1) St. Katharine, with long golden hair, in blue mantle over a white and gold dress, with wheel in left hand and sword in right hand, standing on a black and white chequered pavement.

Below, parts of an inscription :

Orate : p : bono : statu : o :

[e]t : iohaⁿs (*sic*) : vx^o : eius

(2) Head of the Blessed Virgin Mary with golden crown and head of the Holy Child, with part of the top of the sceptre from the figure of the Madonna, the rest of which is gone. In this case, very wisely, there has been no attempt to restore the body, but only a rough suggestion made of the former existence of a figure.

(3) St. John Baptist, in blue, over wine-coloured skins, standing on a flowered ground : only the right foot and a piece of the ground remains, the rest is made up with the following parts of an inscription :

Iohis wyke [e]t

et pe . . . e [?] : p : aiā dnī :

Easternmost window on south side of south aisle.

Three lights cinquefoiled, with Perpendicular tracery in two panels of two lights each, with subordinate lights.

Tracery lights, filled with fragments.

Main lights :

These have single figures on quarry backgrounds like those described above ; each stands on a black and white pavement.

From left to right :

(1) A bishop in eucharistic vestments over fur almuce, which is turned over the amice : the mitre, and the albe and amice apparels are white and gold, the dalmatic

blue, the chasuble red, with a Y-shaped gold orphrey. His right hand is raised in blessing, in his left he holds a gold crozier : his gloves are white with gold tassels ; he wears the ring on the second finger. The figure is made up with the following parts of an inscription :

Orate : p : [a stroke, probably part of bono statu]
: ❖ : alici

- (2) St. James in a blue cloak with a gold border, a book in his right hand, in his left hand a gold staff, part of a purse visible below his left arm with a shell upon it. The base of the figure has been made up with the base of the archbishop in no. (3). The head is gone.
- (3) An archbishop in eucharistic vestments, his right hand raised in blessing, the archiepiscopal cross in his left. Ring and gloves as in no. (1). He has a red chasuble ; over it a golden pallium more like an orphrey, but with three black crosses on it ; the red fringe of a tunicle is visible beneath a green dalmatic. The head is broken. By mistake, in place of the apparelled albe below, the lower part of the figure of St. James, with a white and gold robe and bare feet, has been substituted.

The border of the middle light consists of a single continuous twist or wreath instead of a succession of conventional elongated flowers.

At the base of the middle light is a golden wreath enclosing upon a blue background, a shield of the five wounds with a spear behind the heart. The field of the shield is black ; this is now flaking badly.

North side of chancel.

Three lights cinquefoiled, ogee-headed, with Perpendicular tracery in two panels, each subdivided into three ; the tracery a modern reproduction.

The tracery lights filled with fragments.

Main lights :

These contain three figures in grisaille on a quarry background, surrounded by a border with a little definitely renaissance detail at the head of each light.

These renaissance heads—they are scarcely large enough to be called canopies—contain a shield bearing the cross-keys of St. Peter, with a clerical square cap above and the monogram PC on either side and below, in evident reference to the donor, Peter Carsleigh, prebendary of Wells. On either side of each light the border is formed by a circular shaft adorned with a floral wreath in stain. The quarries forming the background contain, some a flower, some a star, some the monogram PC. The stain is all very red and dark in tone, as is frequently the case in very late work.

The figures are treated with considerable shading, and a very little stain : they represent three saints named Peter :

(1) St. Peter the Deacon.

In dalmatic with deep fringe, over appalled albe and amice : he holds a book in a sudary in his right hand, probably intended for the Gospel Book, and a massive plain gold cross in his left hand : the head is missing.

Inscription on a scroll below :

Sanctus pe

(2) St. Peter the Apostle.

In an ample cope or cloak with a narrow morse or strap, beneath which the buttons of the under-garment are visible beneath the neck. In his right hand he holds two keys and in his left a book ; part of the head is missing.

Inscription on a scroll below :

Sanctus petrus : aplūs

(3) St. Peter the Exorcist.

In cassock and long full surplice gathered into a narrow neckband which is honeycombed or embroidered. In his right hand he holds a gold holy-water sprinkler with separate tufts of bristles ; in his left hand he has a book.

Inscription on a scroll below :

Sanctus : petrus exorcista

At the base of the centre light are the following remains of an inscription :

Carslyght : sac fieri §
 dñi : M^{mo} : cccccc^{mo} sse [?: [e]t : canocⁿⁱ

West window, in tower.

Four lights, cinquefoiled, with Perpendicular tracery in three panels of two lights each, with quatrefoils in lozenges above.

This window contains some interesting and attractively coloured panels set amid modern quarry work of imitation fifteenth-century style. These panels are strongly reminiscent of French glass of the sixteenth century, but it seems probable that they are very clever modern work, most likely by Westlake, executed about 1870-80. Mr. Knowles of York points out that one of the subjects, Christ blessing little children, is not found in ancient glass, and the face-painting and dresses do not appear to agree with the apparent date, while the way in which the pigment is coming off is suggestive of the '70's of the last century.

Some other windows in the church contain a certain amount of ancient glass, viz.

In the N. aisle, beginning at the w. end of the N. side :

- (1) Insignificant fragments in tracery.
- (2) In lozenge-shaped light at top the initials R B : a rose in a small tracery light, and two angle lights.
- (3) Rose, sun and Ihe in upper tracery lights, a row of angels (? seraphim) in larger tracery lights, very dirty, or more probably decayed.
- (4) Rose, another rose and fleur-de-lys in upper tracery lights ; a row of seraphim in white and yellow stain in larger tracery lights, one broken.

In modern single-light window on s. side of chancel, a great many fragments of fifteenth-century glass : among them a wheel of St. Katharine can be distinguished.

THE ANCIENT STAINED GLASS IN EAST BRENT CHURCH.

East window of north aisle.

Three lights ogee-headed, with tracery in two panels each of two lights, trefoiled top and bottom. The tracery is chiefly a modern renewal.

There are eight scenes from the life of our Lord, from the Betrayal to the Ascension and a ninth scene, the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, arranged three in each light, the order being across the top of the window from left to right, then across the middle and then across the base, with black-letter inscriptions, thus :

Left light, top. The Betrayal.

hic prodi^t ē dñs a iudeis

Mid light, top. Christ before Herod.

hic illu^s ē dñs ab herode

Right light, top. Christ condemned by Pilate.

hic est dñs damnat⁹ a pilato

Left light, middle. The Scourging.

hic castigat⁹ ē dñs

Mid light, middle. The Crucifixion.

hic crucifix⁹ ē dñs

On a label in the scene : filius di est iste

Right light, middle. The Descent from the Cross.

hic dñs tollit^r de' cruce

Left light, base. The Burial.

hic sepult⁹ est dñs

Mid light, base. The Ascension [modern].

hic elevat⁹ est dñs

Right light, base. The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary [modern].

On a label in the scene : hic est

The scrolls are close above the scenes, which are surrounded by canopy work.

Beside the Crucifixion and Ascension panels recorded as replacing stolen glass some seventy years before 1905¹ this window contains a very large proportion of modern renewals which, it must be admitted, have been very carefully carried out. The same is the case with the adjacent window, where however the proportion of the ancient glass is much larger. The question of date has already been discussed. The proportion of ancient glass is so small that it has not seemed worth while to take up the large space that would be required for a full description of the scenes. It is, moreover, quite impossible to say whether the modern work is conjectural or a reproduction of glass that actually existed but was considered too much decayed or broken to be retained.

Eastmost window on north side of north aisle.

Three lights cinquefoiled, ogee-headed, with two panels in tracery of two lights each.

Tracery lights : modern glass, except in No. 4 which contains a shield bearing the chalice and host in white and yellow stain. The shield is on a white ground and there is a surrounding border of colour.

Main lights. These contain large figures in white and yellow stain on a quarry background with borders of crowns alternating with small rectangles of blue and red.

From left to right :

- (1) St. James. In white pallium with gold border over a coat of yellow skins, book in left hand, staff with book attached to it in right hand, white hat with wide brim and golden scallop shell in it : grey hair and beard.

Below : $\overline{\text{Ses}}$ ○ : Iacobz : ○

¹ Rev. F. S. P. Seale in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* li, 41. But the Crucifixion panel certainly contains some pieces of ancient glass.

- (2) St. John the Evangelist. In white pallium with a running pattern in yellow stain and line, over white tunic with gold flowers, holding palm in left hand, in right hand gold chalice with circular foot and white serpent issuing from it : has golden hair.

Below : Sc̄s ○ : Ioh'nes : ○ : evangelista : ○ :

- (3) St. John the Baptist. In yellow skins like St. James, but the pallium is powdered with gold flowers : he holds a closed book on his left arm, upon which lies a small lamb holding a flag to which he points with his right hand : has grey hair and beard.

Below : Sc̄s : Ioh'nes : bap : ○ : tista : ○ :