



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about CHURCH STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS

Stained glass has been with us for over a thousand years, traditionally used in the windows of places of worship. The Hundred Parishes has some beautiful church windows.

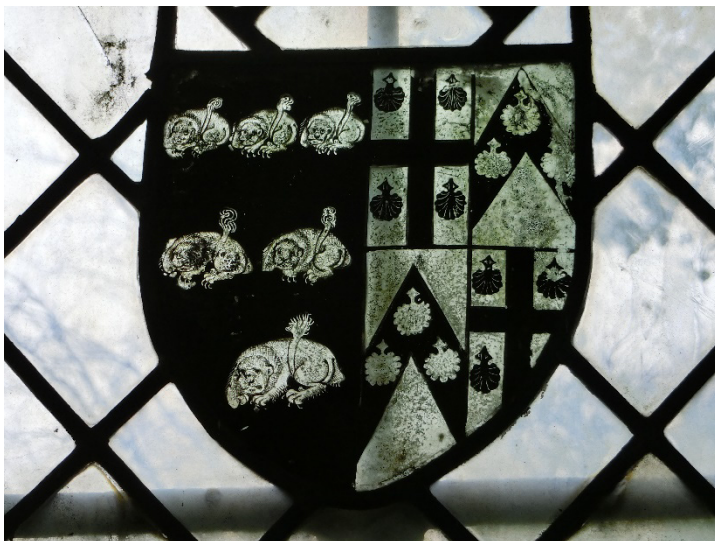
Whilst stained glass windows were installed in churches during the Middle Ages, almost none survive intact from before the 19th century. In the 16th century, during the Reformation – a period which spread through the monarchies of Henry VIII and his children Edward VI and Elizabeth I – almost all vestiges of Roman Catholicism were destroyed throughout England. Stained-glass windows were smashed and replaced with plain glass.

The skills associated with creating and conserving stained glass were lost and not revived until nearly three centuries later. Then, during the Victorian era, a good deal of the wealth that had accumulated, from the British Empire and the Industrial Revolution, was contributed to a general revival of churches. The enthusiasm for church rebuilding included installation of new windows.

Glass was coloured during manufacture. Pieces were joined together with lead and often further enhanced by painting details onto the glass.

The stained glass that we see today dates mostly from the mid-1800s until the early 1900s. Most windows feature scenes from biblical stories or images of saints, nearly always depicted in vivid colours. Many were installed in memory of someone who had died – some tell us their name or the name of the donor; others are silent.

Stained-glass windows are usually best viewed in situ where they can be enjoyed full-size and with benefit from the light shining from outside, but we will show just a few here, starting with two of our older intact windows.



The small pane on the left is in Little Sampford church. It is medieval and presumably survived the Reformation purge as it displays a coat of arms and is not religious.

The Reformation was specifically an English occurrence. Much of Europe remained Roman Catholic and medieval stained glass can be seen outside the UK.

Some European medieval windows were subsequently purchased and brought to England. The one shown here seems to fall into that category. It is in Wendens Ambo church; it dates from the 16th century and is Flemish in origin.



Some churches have attempted to recreate their medieval windows, piecing together fragments that survived the Reformation.

With such a great local selection of stained glass from the late-Victorian and early 1900s, here are just a few examples . . .

The window shown below is in Little Easton; the three ladies represent, from the left, Faith, Charity and Hope. The depiction of a series of characters is a common approach in 19th and 20th-century designs. The subjects often hold symbols to make them recognisable – the most common is the dragon which is associated with St George, although the archangel Gabriel is also often depicted with a dragon.



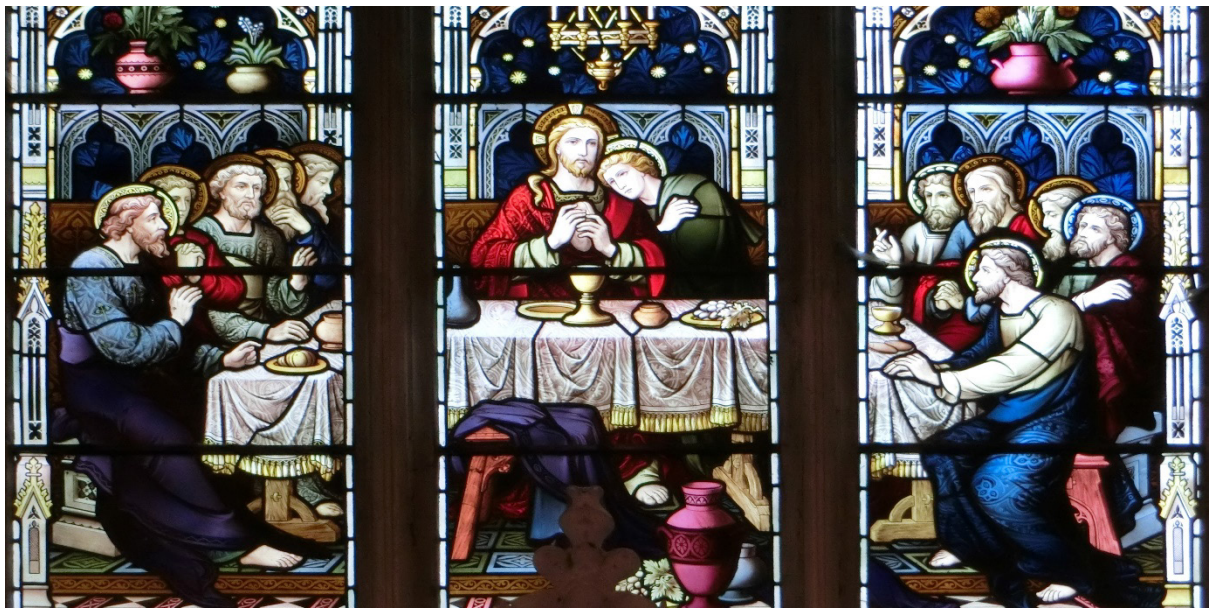
Angels, archangels and saints are regular subjects. The window below, in Wicken Bonhunt, shows the four patron saints for the British Isles: David on the left for Wales, then George for England, Andrew for Scotland and Patrick representing Ireland.



Angels are often depicted with musical instruments -like these in Furneux Pelham. The artists who created these windows are often not known, but we do know that these windows were created by Edward Byrne-Jones and William Morris.



Stories from the Bible have inspired many windows. The last supper is the subject of the window below which can be found in St Mary's, Stansted Mountfitchet.



Great Waltham's windows cover an interesting range of subjects, including this depiction of Jesus recruiting his first two apostles as they were fishing in the Sea of Galilee.



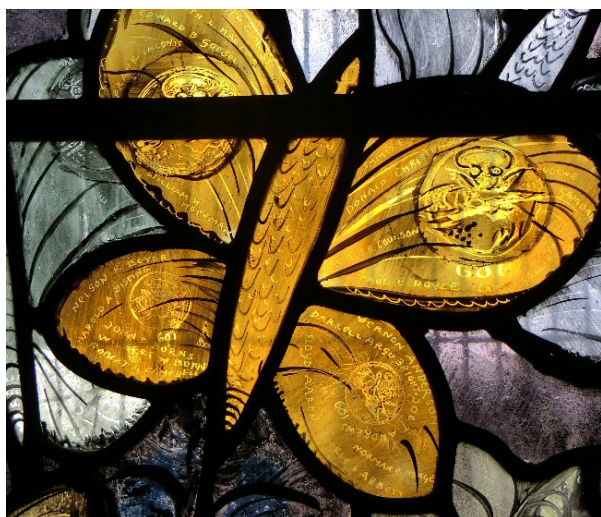
Several churches have stained-glass windows that have been installed since the Second World War.

The Parish Church of St. Andrew in Much Hadham has a window on the west wall of the tower based on an etching by the renowned sculptor, Henry Moore, who lived and worked in the parish at Perry Green. The window, depicting the Tree of Life, was created by Patrick Reyntiens and celebrates the joint use of the church by Church of England and Roman Catholic congregations.



In Little Easton, the parish church has two stained glass windows that honour the American air crews of 386th Bomb Group (known as the Crusaders) who lost their lives in the Second World War. The windows are the Crusaders Window, shown on the right, and the Window of Friendship and Peace.

Another window dedicated to American airmen can be found in St. Georges, Anstey. The Millennium Window, below, records the names of all the men of 398th Bomb Group who died in the Second World War. Their names are etched on the butterflies.



In Broxton, St. Mary's has two modern stained-glass windows, the Hostage Windows. They were installed following the release in 1991 of three men: Terry Waite, Brian Keenan and local man John McCarthy. All had been held hostage in Lebanon for five years. One window, shown on the right, is called the Window of Captivity and the other the Window of Freedom. They were designed by John Clarke and replaced two Victorian windows.



In 1988, The Burma Star Association installed the window shown on the left in Barkway church, commemorating all branches of the armed forces that served in Burma in the Second World War.

This article shows just a few examples of the hundreds of stained-glass windows around the Hundred Parishes. When you are out and about, do pause to look inside our churches at the wonderful range of craftsmanship, some old and some not so old.

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