

The Stained Glass Windows of St Saviour's Parish Church, Guernsey

A brief guide and history by Rev. L. G. H. Craske

The stained glass of the Parish Church of St Saviour has just claim to be among the most complete and beautiful in the churches of the Channel Islands. Colour and stained glass were not encouraged in the churches during the Calvinist period: little, if indeed any, medieval glass survives in Guernsey. All the stained glass in St Saviour, with one late Victorian exception, is of the present century: but the making of a stained glass window has changed little in a thousand years, and the materials and tools are for the most part developments of those used by medieval glaziers.



Turning left after entering through the main, North Door of the church, the first window you encounter is the most recent. It, and its immediate neighbour, is from the studios of Molly Kettlewell of East Coker in Somerset who continued the family business as a designer in stained glass after the death of her husband, Jasper. The theme of the window is that of the liberation from the Germany occupation, showing St George and the Dragon in the right hand roundel and with stylised dark tunnels as a bottom frieze,

representing the huge complex of tunnels under the church and parish land mined by the labour of enslaved Todt workers. The other theme is that of the importance of the horticultural industry in Guernsey's post-war years with the illustration of greenhouses, the tomato plant with its flowering hear, and the freesias in the left hand roundel. The window was given by the family of Ernest Brouard who was a churchwarden and douzenier (parish councillor) during the war.



The second window commemorates the giving of the charger conveying building and land at St Saviour by Robert, Duke of Normandy (portrayed on the right), the father of William the Conqueror, to the Benedictine Abbey of Mont St Michel in Normandy (its Abbot being portrayed on the left). It is probably that there was already a church on the site before the Norman period: by the 13th century the island churches were in a poor state and were rebuilt in the 14th and 15th centuries. The stones of the main pillars were brought from France: members of the de Garis family were said to have been among the masons. The window was given by Renaut de Garis,

the widower of Adele: small figures of early masons may be seen in the bottom left hand corner. The de Garis were also seafarers and recognition of this is made by the little Norman ship. The family crest of the de Garis family surmounts the window with the motto in Latin "While I breathe I hope".

The oldest extant glass in England is a section in York Minster dating from 1150, which is thought to show a king entwined in the branches of a Jesse tree. The Jesse tree design is based on the descent of Jesus from the royal line of David, taking the form of a tree springing from Jesse, the father of David, and ending with the Virgin and Holy Child, with the intermediary descendants placed on scrolls of foliage branching out of each other. Such windows are rare owing to the complexity of design and the demands for window space.

Our third window is a of a Jesse tree, designed and made by Hugh Powell, the grandson fo the maker of the windows in the south aisle. Mr Powell is also a portrait painter who has had a number of commissions in Guernsey, including the portrait of Sir John Loveridge, a former Bailiff, which hangs in the Royal Court. This window was given by Maggie, the widow of Archibald Hope of Luffness. Colonel Hope was a much loved member of our congregation who lived in lower St Saviour's. The regimental crest of his regiment, the Royal Artillery, is seen to the left. He was of an ancient and prominent Scottish family and a member of the Queen's Bodyguard of Scotland: he is shown in the dress of this company in the right of the window. He had a great love for the hydrangea bush: a blue one is included in the right hand corner together with the Hope Family Crest.



The fourth window is an exquisite little portrait of St Francis, given anonymously to commemorate a parish mission in which the Franciscans took part. The artist is Lawrence Lee, who also designed the windows in the Chapel of St Apolline in the parish. He was among an outstanding group of artists who, in a radical break with tradition, designed the seventy windows in Coventry Cathedral after the war.



The fifth window, portraying the resurrection and situated in the East End of the side chapel is also by Lawrence Lee. It is typical of his work and again an interesting example of the New British School that revolutionised stained glass in England after the war: between the wars artists had kept safely to their pictorial painterly tradition in stained glass. It was given by Amanda, the widow of Clifford Moulin, a former churchwarden and well-known islander. He was an architect: among his buildings is the Chapel of Christ the Healer (the Monnaie Chapel) in the Parish of St Andrew.

The east window, above the high altar, was given as a result of a public subscription in the parish and dedicated in 1956. The subject matter is self-explanatory. It was the work of Mrs Rachel Montmorency who, at that time, was on the Council of the British Society of Master Glass Painters. She was also a Fellow of the Society and lived in Putney where, presumably, she worked. The drawings of the window were among the exhibits at an exhibition of stained glass at the Building Centre in London in July 1956. Her work is typical of a school of conservative artists working in light and soft colours who came into prominence after the war, encouraged by the influence of Milner White, the Dean of York. She died in November 1961.



All the windows in the south aisle are from the studios of James Powell & Sons and produced at their Whitefriars Glass Works.



The artists employed by this firm were among the best in quality, their work enriching the Victorian churches of England. The principles for which they stood continued to be employed by the Whitefriars Glass House into the Edwardian period. The subjects are easily recognised biblical stories. The windows themselves, and the brass plates underneath three of them, give the names of the donors and a short account of those whom they commemorate.



The last window has no brass plate. This is in memory of Alice Carey, daughter of Peter Carey. He was Rector from 1843 to 1874. Alice was among a small group of women who met at St Saviour's Rectory and painted under the artist, Naftel.

The window in the baptistry is Victorian; little is known of the history of this window but it was almost certainly put in at about the same time as the present font which came from the Town Church of St Peter Port.