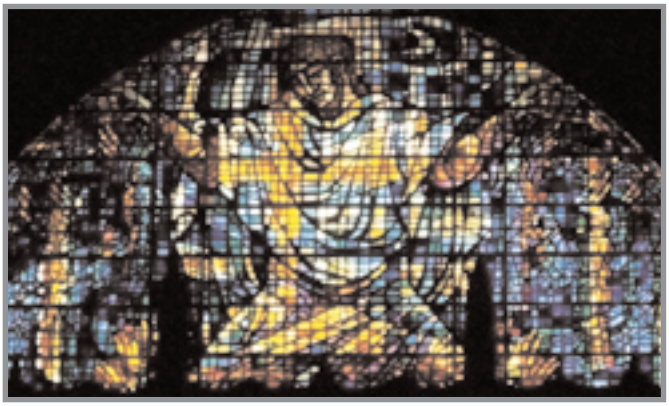


The fine start to September's weather this year bode well for an enjoyable trip cross country to the Roman city of Chester for the autumn gathering. That evening we sat down in the lecture to hear Wirral native Tony Benyon's opening talk on the glazing history of Liverpool Anglican cathedral, the largest and the last 'Gothic' cathedral in the UK. The story begins in 1901 with the decision to hold a design competition judged by Bodley and Shaw; from the over 100 entries, the untried 22-year-old Giles Gilbert Scott was selected. The foundation stone was laid by Edward VII in 1904, though the building wasn't finished until the 70s. The first windows were at the East end. As Scott was mainly concerned with the stonework, he insisted that the window detail should not compete with it; hence the earliest surviving glass, as in the *Te Deum* East window (by J W Brown of Whitefriars), had extreme tonal contrast, the figures almost black on white, and at one point were even lacquered over. James Hogan first designed the armorial glass around Brown's central panels, but when later taking over the glazing completely he subtly introduced colour in the background, and used slab glass and linework rather than tonal shading to modulate the light (so the detail was not lost at distance). Whereas the early glass is heavily Arts & Crafts style, the later rose window motifs reflected current Egyptian interest after the discovery of Tutankhamun, and Art Deco. Still later Hogan abandoned the pictorial style for a mosaic-like pattern of cold against warm tones to bounce the light around. In the aftermath of WWII, when Carl Edwards took over the design to complete the glazing scheme and replace those lost in bombing, after Hogan's sudden death in 1948, he proved himself the natural successor. His Lady Chapel replacement windows are a jewel-like grisaille created in cold and warm blues. Likewise in the nave aisles he succeeds in traversing the tonal divide from the heavy contrasts of William Wilson's windows in the East to the joyful colours of his own West end *Benediate* window, of which Edwards wrote: 'His (Scott's) original idea was that there should be a great wall of stone without glass and one's attention would be forced back to the east end but instead there will be a huge end of rich colour ... it is not like a painting with solid colours, for the light spreads and mixes as it streams through.' Its 1600 square feet of glass contain over 200 000 pieces, supported in a bronze 9-ton armature. As the nave was still being built, the window panels as they were made were put in crates at Apothecaries' Hall. Delays abounded: in Scott's original scheme the West end had a rose window at the apex and an elaborate porch, but in 1967 these were abandoned, with the result that at a late stage Carl was asked to make the window 20 feet taller! Then, shortly before installation the bronze armature bars were stolen... . The window was finally dedicated in 1978.

Friday The following morning, en route to Liverpool, we called in at Bidston, St Oswald. This 13C church (extended in the 19C) has an East window by Fred Cole, who began with the 'other William Morris & Co' and also designed for Whippell of Exeter; in the North are some maidens bedecked with flowers by R A Bell, most probably from his Liverpool days, as well as a 1882 Henry Holiday that had been badly damaged. On the N wall is a 2-light window of two warriors with A&C elements by Frank Salisbury, brother of H J Salisbury, who is better known as a portrait painter and whose biggest window is at Wesley's Chapel, London. Another is by Henry Gustave Hiller, who was born in Manchester and was apprenticed to a draper there before starting his own firm in Liverpool. Finally, in the NW corner is a small window by Trena Cox, the first of many on this tour (*detail right*).

On then to Liverpool Cathedral; we began in the Lady Chapel where Peter Cormack drew attention to the decorative detail: the wood carving and altarpiece by Walter Gilbert (who cofounded the Bromsgrove Guild) and stone carvings and metalwork by E. Carter Preston, designer of the 'dead man's penny' (a medallion given to families of soldiers killed in WWI) and the armature for the glass. Peter also pointed out that Scott had developed his own version of 'Gothic': not Gothic Revival but a living interpretation of the medieval, as in the US 'modern Gothic' (Princeton Chapel being a reduced version of this church). Our attention was also drawn to the use of 'Minerva glass' – the juxtaposition of blues and picks to create an opalescent effect – as well as the influence on Hogan's style of Christopher Whall. His linear painting style also proved faster to execute than much-shaded figures, so was cheaper and practical for artists with no independent income.

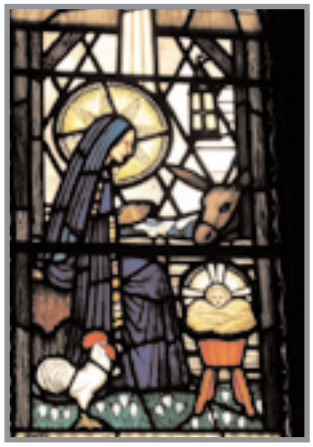
The rest of the morning was spent in the cathedral, giving an opportunity to study in detail the development of the glazing and the panels. Who could resist the opportunity to climb the small stairway to view at closer quarters the superb semicircular *Risen Lord* crowning the West window (*left*), or to linger in front of its 3 lancets to pick out the people and animals, and even the River Mersey, hiding within its brilliant swirling colours? I was also much taken with the details of the windows leading up to it, the first Bishops' window by Wilson, others by Edwards when the former fell ill, depicting in turn parsons, laymen including the architect Scott, musicians, hymnwriters (in which appears a Mrs Alexander with handbag on wrist – surely a glass first!) and scholars. There is even a panel depicting the glaziers and studio.

Lunch in the cathedral was excellent and served us well for a bracing tour of the windswept Wirral peninsula. We started at Oxton, with a 19C church by Edmund Kirby, to see 3 windows by Margaret Agnes Rope, an A & C artist in the Birmingham tradition who later moved to the Glass House in Fulham, became a Carmelite nun but contained to make glass. This set depicts St Mary with John the Baptist, the English martyrs and St Winifred with rowan tree and blackbird – motifs borrowed from Henry Payne. On to New Brighton, another creation of Giles Scott, with a pre-WWII window by Joyce Meredith, a student of Whall who may have been his assistant for a time. Two others may be by Reginald Bell. At the next stop, Hoylake, amidst many Powell designs, was another Margaret Rope, and in a side chapel work by J William Foster (also a Whall student who most probably learned from Karl Parsons) who was described as 'tickling the glass endlessly', so meticulous was he. It is notable that he used photos for his faces and hands; one light, in memory of an aviator, even has an angel holding an aeroplane (hmm!).

Next, a treat – and not of the glass variety: an icecream stop at Parkgate, where several shops compete to sell the homemade variety. Here, we learned how, in the distant past, our brave heroine Pauline English plucked the foolish lad Tony Benyon

from the engulfing mud flats that lie between Parkgate and the sea. With much prompting, and to the dismay of the Chairman's husband, she retold the tale, amid sounds of munching and chuckling. Finally we boarded the bus once more, as there was a final visit planned before supper: Neston, whose archeology dates back to the Ist millenium AD with the uncovering of Viking crosses, as well as the first depiction in Europe of jousting on horseback, which are proudly displayed inside the church. Here, amongst designs by Burne Jones, C E Kempe, Clayton & Bell, Hardman and one possible Holiday, is a 1919 memorial window by Bernard Rice – another Birmingham school artist who also worked in Munich and Innsbruck. When repatriated after WWI, he worked for William Gammon of Chester, then for Brangwyn.

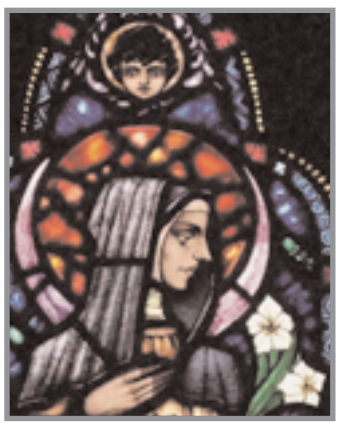
That evening Peter Jones shared his research on the career of Trena Cox, a Wirral artist who had studied at Laird School of Art from 1917 and who was later based in Chester. She made many windows there and around so his detailed description of her work (*a detail below*) subsequently proved invaluable.



SATURDAY Time it was to head off across the border and into the Welsh hills ... our first stop was Hawarden with its 4-light West window (1898) dedicated to William Gladstone and his wife, one of the last designed by Burne Jones. A Nativity scene, the arrangement of figures, however, resembles the artist's painting of King Arthur; unusually, the angels are in the foreground, their backs to the viewer and wings turned towards us. There are 6 other Burne Jones designs here, the windows dated later (1902–13), as well as a Morris & Co. East window made after the artist's death. In the Gladstone chapel is one by William Blake Richmond – a friend of Morris and Burne Jones and a pioneer of glass thar was painted minimally. In the choir a 1902 panel by Holiday contains, in the borderm his special slab glass. Windows in the south are by Wailes, with others by Frampton, Powell and F C Eden.

At Northrop, our next call, the surviving medieval fragments of the ancient church, still intact in 1830, were replaced after 1839, and its East end had been rebuilt entirely according to a design by William Butterfield, with a new East window designed by him and made by the O'Connor brothers. Amongst other fine examples of 19C craftsmanship including the Birmingham firm of Hardman, Whitefriars and Ballantine & Allen are several by Charles Clutterbuck, who had previously worked for Hugh Chambres Jones, a man from a Liverpool family whose fortune was founded on slavery. Clutterbuck had previously made a name as a miniature painter and had exhibited at the Royal Academy. The painting on his windows, however, was showing severe paint loss, particularly of the dark enamels – possibly due to the way he used other paints in combination with these.

At Pantasaph, next on the tour, were 2 two late windows by Harry Clarke & Co but made after his death and utilizing machine-textured glass rather than the slab that he himself used,



so they didn't achieve the glowing quality of his own work. Their low position did, however, provide a chance for closeup scrutiny of the back and the painting technique that many took advantage of (*detail left*). Other windows were by Michael O'Connor, an Irish artist who trained with Willement, then worked in Bristol before returning home, also a Franz Mayer, more by Hardman and a 'Mother and Child' and reredos by Pugin.

On to Denbigh church, and another fine lunch. Here is a North side window by Richard Stubington, who studied under Henry Payne at Birmingham and later replaced him. Payne, who was strongly influenced by late Burne Jones style, used to use his students to make his glass; early Stubington windows were very reminiscent of Payne, though they became much more modernist using machine-rolled, kiln-slumped and 'spoiled' glass. The border medallions (made by students) appear influenced by early French style; also he (like Geddes) was looking at pre-Classical Greek and Babylonian art at the British Museum, and his Gabriel figure on the right seems to reflect this ... Peter suggested possibly this style could be termed 'Arts & Crafts Expressionism'. Burne Jones had been the first to use Byzantine style in his art – for example his elongated angels hark back to those at Ravenna; Powell's designs in turn were to be influenced by this style. Another window at Denbigh is by Veronica Whall, daughter of Christopher who had been Henry Payne's tutor in London; the 6-light West window is by John Vaughan Rowlands, a Liverpool glass artist we find listed in the 1881 census as a 'glass stainer', then a 'glass merchant'.

After lunch, the first stop was Cilcain, at a church that had stood roofless for 210 years after a fire, though its East window still had panels of the original medieval glass and in the ceiling a fine set of medieval carved figures. Next, at Buckley, the East window by Henry Holiday was dedicated to Catherine Gladstone (the Prime Minister's son-in-law was minister here). Holiday, a Liberal Socialist, was a longtime friend and admirer of Gladstone, who epoused many radical causes including dress reform and Irish home rule. This window and others date to a time when the artist had broken with Powell to set up alone. He used his own double-edged slab, and also Prior's early English, to achieve a jewel-like effect that was much admired in the US. His designs, also inspired by pre-Christian Greek art and the Renaissance, was the antithesis of the 'Gothic Revival'. A small light was by Trena Cox, and a *Good Samaritan* (1991) was by Eddie Nuttgens. At Bistre, our final stop, 2 more windows by Trena Cox awaited, also one by Alfred Childs – who had started out as Whall's assistant then had moved to Dublin in 1901, becoming the first manager for Sarah Purser at AnTur Gloine. Like Whall he used slab glass, and his backgrounds feature much foliage; as, apart from one in Rogate (Surrey) most of his work is in Eire, this one is unusual.

SUNDAY The conference dinner, as usual, had featured plenty of high spirits, and for various reasons the group that gathered for the slide show and final walk to Chester Cathedral was noticeably smaller. Nevertheless, there was much of note in the final venue that I was glad not to have missed, and the unhurried pace gave each the chance to linger by those works of personal preference. There was much for the Victorian enthusiasts, as well as a modern design by Alan Younger along the South aisle, replacing a Wailes window. In the cloisters I took the chance to study more work by Trena Cox, for which I was rapidly developing a fondness. Finally, but by no means least, we met in the refectory for tea and cake, and to hear a detailed explanation of the design and making of the recent window there by Ros Grimshaw: *The 6 Days of Creation*

(*detail above*). The brief had called for 'an abstract design, bold colours, reflecting the perennial nature of God as well as his energy'. Ros's window is divided vertically into 6 lights, each reflecting 1 day, while the white outline of the gigantic hand of the Creator stretches across the lights to the end of the 5th day. A fascinating window, and many thanks for the explanation ... and to Sue for a great swan song!

Chris Wyard