

Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History.

THE MEDIÆVAL GLASS IN YAXLEY CHURCH.

BY CHRISTOPHER WOODFORDE.

The glass in Yaxley Church has been chosen for description not because it is of especial interest but because it affords an excellent example of a collection of fragments that tell enough for us to be able to reconstruct to a surprising extent the original scheme of glazing.*

Our plan will be to describe the glass in detail and then to draw what conclusions we can at the end.

East window, northern light (reading from top to bottom). Fourteenth-century quarry work with a running oak-spray pattern. On this is set a ruby rose of the same date. Below are fifteenth century remains—a winged lion with a nimbus, a piece of lettering: *Scs Mathias*, a sun, and early quarries with strap-work and floral designs. Next comes a panel of thirteenth century grisaille with "cross-hatch" ornament, set upon fifteenth century tabernacle work. Below are a great number of small fragments of the fifteenth century.

The panel of glass that catches the eye at once is a figure of St. John with chalice and devil. Below is a text which need not necessarily belong to the figure of St. John: *nuncietis ei quia amore langues* (Song of Solomon v., 8).

Middle light. At the top is some grisaille like that in the northern light, but with holly and not oak-sprays. Next,

*As a matter of fact, portions of the glass have been illustrated more than we might suppose; this is perhaps accounted for when we remember the accessibility of the church (on the main road from Ipswich to Norwich) when travel was a different matter to what it is now.

a fourteenth century scroll bearing the text *Ave Maria gratia plena* in Lombardic lettering. The greater part of the rest of the light is filled with a series of fifteenth-century quarries. In addition to these quarries, this light contains a very beautiful head of Christ with a hand supporting it; a golden jar upon a ruby background; an *IHS* monogram in a roundel; a late and small figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary done in yellow stain.

Southern light. This light is, to a large extent, the counterpart of the northern light in respect of the more fragmentary glass. But we notice a small black-letter inscription—*Scs Georgius*; an angel with a lute, set upon a blue background, an inscription beneath reading thus—*exaltabit caput*: and, finally, same grisaille with holly leaf pattern.

Tracery lights. 1. A female saint holding a book and set upon a blue background. 2. A female saint set upon a red background. 3. A seated figure in a curious cap, bearing a scroll with his name *Tobet*. 4. St. Andrew with his cross. 5. An angel with part of a musical instrument. 6. St. Peter with his keys. The smaller openings are filled with blue and red roses upon floral decoration carried out in white glass and black enamel. All the glass in the tracery lights is of the fifteenth century, and the figures in lights 3 and 4 are somewhat restored at the bottom.

A window in the south aisle has *in situ* in a tracery light a rather dim fifteenth-century figure of St. Catherine with her wheel. The two windows on the north wall of the nave retain the original fifteenth century filling in the smaller tracery openings.

The rest of the mediaeval glass (with the exception of small fragments leaded up into two lancet windows of the tower), is to be found set in the tower "screen." There is a great deal of fifteenth century glass here: it is all of interest, in particular a head of a bishop, a figure of an apostle with a boat, a small figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary, part of a large cruciform church, and a quarry with a picture of a hart lying in the water.

We may begin our reconstruction chronologically, and notice that there are remains of thirteenth century glass, rare in East Anglia, where so much rebuilding or insertion of larger windows was carried out two hundred years later. To get some idea of what a wider expanse of glass of this date looks like, we have to go to Pettistree in Suffolk, or to Saxlingham Nethergate, near Norwich.

Of fourteenth century glass not a great deal remains. The quarry work in the heads of the lights in the east window would have formed the background to canopy-and-figure subjects. Windows at Dennington and Icklingham All Saints in Suffolk or at North Elmham in Norfolk contain good examples of what Yaxley would once have had. Perhaps earlier than the quarry work is the label *Ave Maria gratia plena*. This enables us to reconstruct an Annunciation scene with St. Gabriel holding his label, and the Blessed Virgin Mary another with such words as *Ecce ancilla domini*. We might suppose that the golden jar in the middle light of the east window once had lilies in it, and belonged to the scene, too, but it is half a century older.

To pass on to the fifteenth century, we can now complete in our minds at least one large subject. The head of Christ, in the east window, supported by a hand, is very evidently part of a subject to be found more than once in glass in this part of England—the *Pieta*. The Blessed Virgin Mary supports the scourged and crucified body of her Son upon her knees. In the east window of Long Melford church and at Leverington, Cambs., are complete representations of the subject.* Woolpit once had another in the east window.

If we compare the head of Christ with that of the bishop in the tower "screen," it is plain that they came from the same school of painting. Many other remains in Norfolk and Suffolk clearly came from that same school, e.g., the heads of a bishop and an angel at Stratton Strawless, of St. Gregory at St. Peter Hungate, Norwich,

*These two are plainly of common origin. See Westlake, *History of Design in Painted Glass*, Vol. III, p. 91.

and East Harling, Norfolk, of the Archangel Gabriel at St. Peter Hungate and Ringland, Norfolk, to mention but a few.

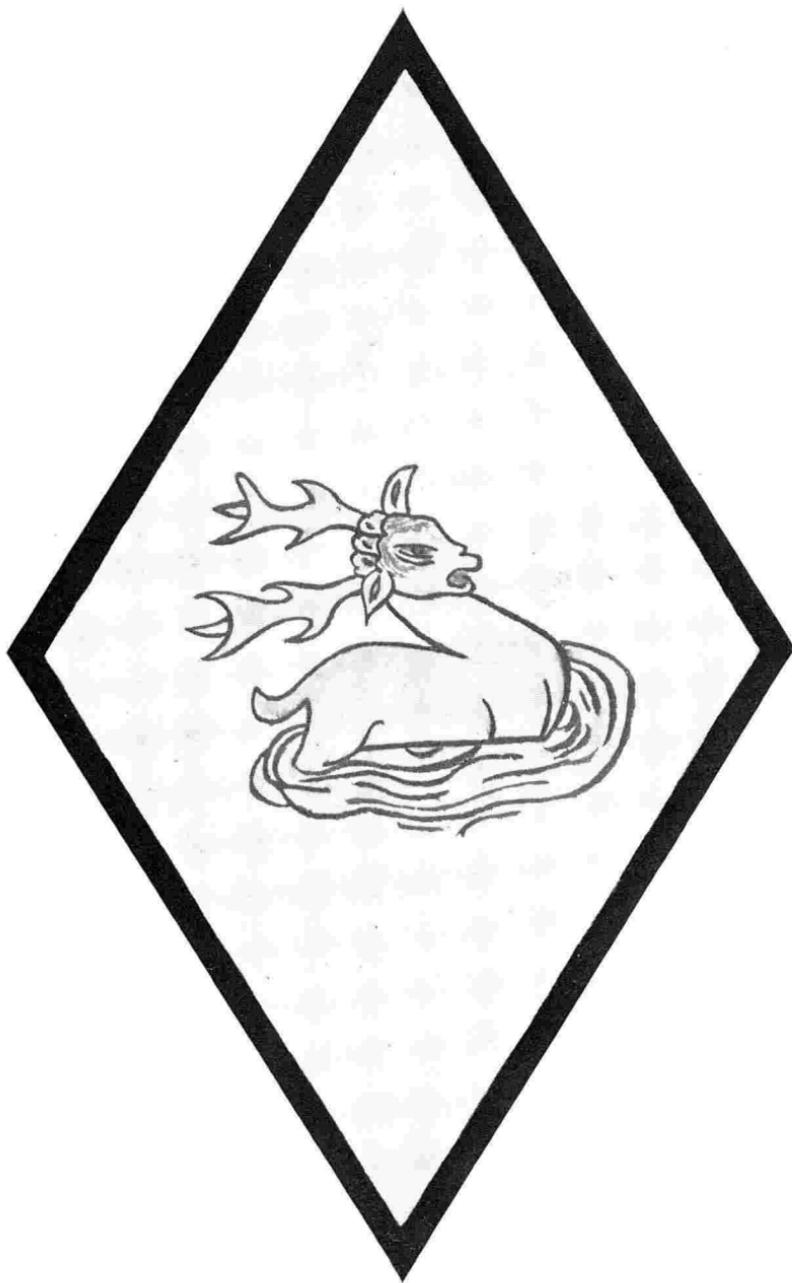
The figures of St. John with his chalice and St. Jude with his boat have been taken out of tracery lights. We must suppose that a series of apostles filled the tracery lights of several windows, perhaps of the chancel. † We may compare such series at Field Dalling and Pulham St. Mary Magdalene in Norfolk. The series at Long Melford is now broken up and scattered through several windows. The figure of St. Catherine would almost certainly have been accompanied by figures of such popular saints as Margaret, Barbara, Lucy, Agatha, Dorothy, Petronilla or Sitha, judging from remains in windows of other churches, and from screen panels.

The winged and nimbed lion, and the *Scs Mathias* inscription show us that another set of traceries were filled with a stock subject—the Evangelistic symbols, remains of which are found, in East Anglia at any rate, almost wherever any amount of ancient glass remains. The large church in the tower “screen”—was it held by a donor or did it form part of a large scene in the life of some saint?

The quarries deserve special notice because of their variety and excellence. ‡ There are examples of almost every *type* of quarry design. Conventional floral designs are found, also two beautiful quarries of birds and one of a butterfly. The sacred initials I and C are also to be seen, and in particular the quarry, already mentioned, with a picture of a hart in water. It recalls to mind the present arms of the Town of Hertford, but, in actual fact, it represents the badge and rebus of Walter

† The figures of Peter and his brother Andrew need not necessarily have belonged to the SS. John and Jude series. They occur alone with other saints who are not apostles or with angels, as in the east windows of Much Hadham church, Herts, and Westwood church, Wilts. They would appear again in the “Apostle series” proper.

‡ It is these that have been so often illustrated, e.g., by Westlake, *op. cit.* Vol. III, p. 153, Nos. 4 and 6, plate CXVI, Nos. 8, 12, 18, 21 and A. W. Franks in *A Book of Ornamental Glazing Quarries* (London, 1869), plates 56, 78, 81, 92, 94, 112.



REBUS OF WALTER LYHART, BISHOP OF NORWICH.
IN THE TOWER SCREEN. YAXLEY CHURCH.



HEAD OF A BISHOP IN THE TOWER SCREEN.
YAXLEY CHURCH.

Lyhart, Bishop of Norwich,* and is said to occur in several East Anglian churches,† although I have not seen it except at Yaxley.

It is hoped that this survey will serve two purposes ; to add another note of interest to the very beautiful and well-kept church of Yaxley, and also to show that "mere fragments" of glass can, after a little careful scrutiny, tell a much more full story of their past glory than many people seem to think.

*Walter Lyhart was consecrated at Lambeth, 26th February, 1447. His chief title to fame is that he persuaded Felix V, the antipope, to renounce the papacy to Nicholas V to secure peace in the Church. A fire occurred in Norwich Cathedral in 1463 and destroyed the roof of the chancel. Lyhart built the splendid vaulted roof we now see. He also built the rood screen, now much restored ; his rebus appears on it. He died 24th May, 1472.

†So J. D. Le Couteur, *English Mediæval Painted Glass* (S.P.C.K., 1926), p. 117.

STAINED GLASS IN THE EAST WINDOW OF YAXLEY CHURCH.

ELUCIDATION BY REV. H. A. HARRIS.

Any critical study of Yaxley east window requires some explanation as to why the east window, which to a casual observer presents no anacronism nor ambiguity, yet on close examination reveals itself as a medley of odds and ends of glass leaded up without any recognisable regard to periods or definite design.

The Rev. Wm. Henry Sewell, who was Incumbent of Yaxley for 35 years (being born in 1836 and dying in 1896), conceived the idea of pooling all the pieces of coloured glass, that formed a patchwork of scraps, scattered about the church, into a collected whole for an east window.

The glass was therefore removed into his study and placed upon a cloth covered table, over which he worked for many months, piecing them into the present form.

When completed the window was leaded up and put in place by Mr. Burroughs, of Eye, and dedicated on Sunday, July 17th, 1887.

A short account of the glass is contained in a Latin inscription incorporated in the window, of which I give Mr. Sewell's own translation.

“ These fragments of painted glass, dating from the year 1199 to 1549 (and later) for the most part collected from the windows of this Church, were put in such order as was possible, under the direction of the Vicar in the year of Salvation 1886, to the greater glory of God.”

The style of lettering is copied from an inscription outside the east end of Denham Church and it is interesting to note that a portrait of Mr. Sewell is contained in the loop of the capital P of P'ochia—the initial letter of the last line but one.

It was the intention of Mr. Sewell to have a full description and history of this window printed; but finding it too expensive he gives us a few notes only.

“ The upper parts, he tells us, comprise the tracery of the window, and contain a representation of the heavenly Jerusalem with its heavenly inhabitants. ‘ They stand, those halls of Sion, all jubilant with song, and bright with many an angel and all the martyr throng ’; e.g., Jubal, S. Andrew, S. Peter, and angels.

The lower parts of the three lights are filled with squares intended to be covered with the moveable reredos, as containing glass, doubtless of singular interest to the herald or the genealogist or any Yaxley person, but suggesting considerations of no strictly religious tendency.

The Key to the meaning of the window is in that part of the middle light intended to be always seen.

It begins in the arch-head with the angel Gabriel's announcement of the Incarnation, followed beneath it by the I.H.S.—the Holy name given by the angel of the Lord.

Then comes the tenor of the Blessed Virgin's life—teaching ‘ Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it,’ represented in the motto, ‘ Fear God and keep the 10 commandments.’

A little lower down is to be seen the chief one who stood beside the Cross. 'At the cross her station keeping stood the mournful Mother weeping.'

The Deposition from the Cross is supposed to have now taken place.

The Saviour's Sacred Head—still surrounded by crown of piercing thorn—is gently upheld by one loving hand to be seen beneath the head of the Departed. The recumbent Head is surrounded by a figure (to be seen on the roodscreen) formed of three circles with three angles—a trinity—thus indicating our faith that the Sacred Person therein enclosed is the Second Person of the indivisible Godhead, the most Holy Trinity.

It was fitting therefore that a man of princely rank and fortune (S. Joseph of Arimathea—here represented crowned) should help in the Deposition.

We may feel sure that S. Mary of Bethany (represented grasping her hair, in the corner to the left hand of the spectator) who on the previous Saturday, had brought in an alabastron (represented in the corner to the right hand) of spikenard to perfume as for burial, the Body of Christ while yet alive, would not fail to render such accustomed offices when Jesus was really dead.

The medallion above of the Virgin Mary contains flowers in bloom, indicating her hope of the Resurrection.

Flowers beneath the Saviour's body also show forth the same articles of our belief, which is the subject of the rejoicing of the angels in the south light, playing on a golden harp and singing the Messianic prophecy, 'He shall lift up His head.'

S. John, the Apostle of love, in a corresponding position in the north light, another disciple of the cross sending a message of love 'Tell ye Him that I am sick of love.'

Above the Saviour's head are the two birds of the Cross. One, the Pelican, vulning itself, representing the love of the Creator for His creatures. The other the Robin Redbreast, representing the love of the creatures for their Creator."