

King's Sutton Parish Church
St. Peter and St. Paul



The Windows

50p

THE WINDOWS OF THE CHURCH OF SS PETER AND PAUL

KING'S SUTTON

There are few original windows in the church, for the building has been rebuilt, and enlarged, several times. The oldest structure is the chancel, of the 12th century but the windows here to north and south, are 14th century with some restoration by Sir Gilbert Scott in the 19th century. The small one on the south side probably dates from the 19th century restoration too, and the east window, a perpendicular design, is also by Scott.

The nave windows are largely of the 14th century when the two aisles were widened. The east and west windows on the north side were truncated when the roof was lowered in the 18th century. The west window of the tower has had its lower portion hidden by the roof of the west porch. It is interesting that the western parts of the aisles have no windows to north or south. And none of the porches has windows. The clerestory windows, high in the nave, probably date from the early 16th century.

It is likely that in the medieval period all the windows in the church would have been filled with coloured glass, but all this has gone. As we shall see some of the present plain glass is of the 16th century, which might suggest that it was then, at the time of the Reformation, that the medieval glass was removed. But generally speaking most destruction of glass took place during the time of Oliver Cromwell in the 17th century.

However, we should look first at the tracery of the windows: the stone patterns within the overall window. These are fundamentally structural: to enable such large areas to be glazed. The glass set within its lead frame-work would not be able to withstand the pressures of wind and rain, and so the uprights of stone enable the window to be glazed in several narrower areas. The diamond shapes of glass are known as quarries. As the tops of the windows are arched, the mullions have to give way, and the dating of window-shapes is often made by the patterns at the tops of the windows.

Those in the south aisles, to east and west, are very good examples of early perpendicular tracery. The one to the west also has lead comes, holding smaller pieces of glass. As we have observed the windows to west and east of the north aisle have been truncated – the western one would have been a fully perpendicular tracery.

The “plain” glass around the church has been much repaired over the centuries and provides an interesting pattern of textures, and when the light falls on the quarries, it makes fascinating designs. Some of the glass is almost green; some is textured by the way it was made. But certainly the plain windows deserve some study as well as those with coloured glass.

So let us begin with the windows to north and south of the chancel: these are 14th century designs although most have been repaired. The “new” clearly replaces eroded stone. The design is two lights with quatrefoils in the apex. Only one has coloured glass. The upper window in the organ chamber/choir vestry, which can only be seen from the outside, is a similar design.

The clerestory windows are quite small, despite very deep splays inside. The reason is the height of the aisle roofs. These are typical early 16th century domestic windows, of three lights with Tudor shaped arches.

The window at the east end of the north aisle has five lights, each with a horseshoe-shaped arch, and then interlacing from the mullions gives five triangular shapes and a number of “daggers”. This pattern would have continued above, before it was altered.

The window at the west end of that aisle has also been altered. Here the upper parts of the tracery were cut through and a new horizontal stone placed across. The tracery that remains is Perpendicular in style, probably of the late 14th century and has lead patterning within the upper lights. The five main panels have ten smaller panels above. It is this glass which has a green tone.



The west window of the south aisle is dramatic. The spaces within the upper tracery are quite large, and hence the subdivisions of metal. The design suggests the 14th century, but the glass is thought to be of the 18th. The window is not quite symmetrical, you will notice. Again this has five lights, tall panels with double cusped arches, then four complex quatrefoils and elongated trefoils. There are two larger trefoils above the central quatrefoils and a final tier above.

That at the east end is the finest in the church with its interlacing patterns of stone. The quarries are at a variety of angles to a flat surface, and the light catches these differences to make a delicate but vivid texture of light on the glass.



The window in the tower has three lights, the central one rising to the apex. There are small triangles above the arches of the outer ones.

And so, almost, to the windows with coloured glass. “Almost”, because of the four windows in the aisles, all but one has coloured glass; but the designs are similar. Three lights in all of them, but two patterns of tracery: the eastern ones with three octofoil lights and some smaller ones: the west one on the north has three large octofoils and four smaller shapes: the south one a sexifoil at the top and two quatrefoils below.

The eastern window on the north aisle has coloured glass in its central light. A text at the foot records that it is a memorial of Elizabeth Jeffkins, Matron of Charterhouse School who died April 5th 1856. The window was made by James Powell and Son. In 1834 James had bought a glass company off Fleet Street in the City, which had been in business since the 17th century. He died in 1840, but the company flourished under his son. But glass as early as this window, dating from 1858, is rare.

The design shows Christ knocking at a door with a text from Revelation 3.20: 'Behold I stand at the door and knock'. The famous painting of this image by Holman Hunt dates from a similar time but there is no influence on this. In the Hunt picture Christ looks out, and wears a crown, carrying a lantern. In the window the left hand is pointing outwards, but Christ is waiting for his knock to be answered. There is also the additional figure of the angel. Perhaps this is connected to the biblical text. John the Divine, in his vision on Patmos, is told by the Risen Christ to "write to the angel of the church", and this quotation comes from the seventh church at Laodicea.

There are weeds against the horseshoe-arched door and it has no exterior handle, making the point that it can only be opened from the inside, and the Revelation text continues: 'If you hear me and open the door I will come in.' The person must invite Christ in.

At the top of the panel is a crown and the letters IHS (Greek for JES[us]) set within a crown of thorns. The colours are rather sombre, and the angel has long purple wings. The border is decorated with leaves and the grisaille background has acorns.

The window in the south upper wall of the chancel has three of the apostles. I wonder if there was ever a hope of filling the other three windows with the remaining nine. These three are S John, S Philip and S James the Less. The last is described as James the Son of Alphaeus in lists of the apostles, and 'less' to distinguish him from James the brother of John. They each carry books, symbols of the Gospel. John is shown unbearded, a reference to the tradition



that he was young, and the chalice with the dragon emerging refers to a story that, when there was an attempt to poison him, the poison emerged out of the cup like a dragon. At the top there are three angels with texts which are hard to decipher. They are in fact holding phrases from the Apostles' Creed: 'crucified dead & buried' (top), and 'descended into hell. The' (left). The angel on the right has been inserted back-to-front – the writing in mirror-image reads: 'Ascended into heaven'. At the foot an inscription reads: 'To the glory of God in memory of their father and mother by two sons'. This window, and the Samuel one below, is by John

Burlison (1843-91) and Thomas Grylls (1845-1913). They had been apprentices at Clayton and Bell and formed their own company in 1868, so these are early examples of their independent work.

The Samuel window (on the cover), dates from 1872. It shows Samuel, whose story can be found in 1 Samuel, in the Old Testament, dressed as a deacon and with a thurible. This connects him with the worship of the temple, and possibly at that time, the desire rather than the practice, of using incense in worship here. He has long, curling hair. The letter 'S' is embroidered on the cloth that hangs behind him. The brass plaque on the windowsill tells of Charles Knight who died aged 13 in 1872. Perhaps this Samuel is a portrait of him.

Next we will examine the east window of the Chancel. The tracery of this window is in the perpendicular style with four tall lights, and was designed by Scott. The glass dates from the mid 1860s when the chancel was restored. The reredos and altar, now in the north aisle, were designed for the chancel and the reredos covered the lower part of the window. This has poor quality glass in a geometric design and is obscured by the painted panel. The window has eight scenes from the life of Christ, and above are angels with instruments: pairs of psalteries and harps.



The lower panels are: Christ praying in Gethsemane; His arrest; the Scourging and the Via Dolorosa. The upper ones: Resurrection, Crucifixion, Deposition and Ascension – a somewhat strange arrangement.

Each has small details which bring the rather conventional imagery to life: in Gethsemane, a cup is being presented to the praying Christ, as from heaven. There are olive trees – ‘Gethsemane’ means ‘the olive press’ – and a star to indicate night-time. Below, two apostles sleep. One of them is Peter with his sword tucked into his robes. In the next panel he is wielding it, to attack Malchus, a servant of the High Priest. (S John 18. 10-11), and

above Judas, with his bag of money, is kissing Jesus as the soldiers come to arrest him. And there are more stars and a torch. In the scourging Jesus wears the crown of thorns and the royal robe lies discarded on the chequered floor. The way of the cross has Roman soldiers – SPQR – Senatus Populusque Romanus – the Senate and People of Rome. Mary, identified by a robe with lilies, accompanies her son. There are passion flowers in the foreground and you will notice the cross throughout is not bare wood, but shaped and decorated with flowers.



The Crucifixion shows the sun turned to blood and the moon eclipsed, and there is a red circle behind Christ's head. His mother, Mary, and the Beloved Disciple, stand together, barefoot; and John with a book, representing his Gospel. In the next panel, the Deposition: two richly clad, older men are helping John and Peter to lower the dead body of Christ. S John tells us of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus burying the body. (John 19. 38-42).

The Resurrection has a mandorla with rays of glory and stars. This is the eternal world breaking into this one. The risen Christ has a banner and the wounds are visible. Below where the top of the grave has been tossed aside, are two soldiers: one asleep, the other stunned by the event. Finally, the Ascension, showing the gold empyrean and Jesus' robes move as he ascends into heaven. A crowd of apostolic faces look upward.

At the foot of the window there are angels with symbols of the passion: crown of thorns, nails and hammer, lantern, sponge, cross and the spear. (Two are hidden by the panel).

The text reads: '+John William Willes deceased 1826 Aet 26 +William Shippen Willes Clerk MA decd 1822 aet 59 +Margarette Willes deceased 1831 aet 58 +William Willes deceased 1865 aet 63'.



This window was made by William Wailes (1808-1881) of Newcastle. He was originally a grocer and tea merchant but took an interest first in enamelling and then, from 1830, studied stained glass in Germany. He set up his own studio in 1838 and worked with Pugin from 1841. He is particularly known for his linked colours: mauve with red, yellow with blue, red with acid green. Among his finest achievements is the west window of Gloucester Cathedral.

Of the two windows in the south aisle, Wailes made the eastern one and Frederick Preedy the other. The Wailes one features women in the gospels. In the tracery there is a woman with two children and below figures (rather androgynous) with the cross and an anchor. The latter is the symbol of hope.

The text reads: To the glory of God and in memory of Mary Patience Willes deceased March VI MDCCCLXXI Aged LX (March 6th 1871, aged 60).



Frederick Preedy (1820-98) was born at Offenham near Evesham, and was principally an architect; but he also designed windows, often with extraordinary colours. This window illustrates the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25 vv 35 ff. At the top the figure of Christ in majesty ('he shall sit upon the throne of his glory' – Matthew 25.31) and then two angels with texts: 'ye have done – it unto me'. The parable asserts that good deeds done to the poor are done to Christ. Each scene has the appropriate words: 'Hungered and ye gave me meat', 'stranger and ye took me in' (left), 'sick and ye visited me', 'thirsty and ye gave me drink', 'naked and ye clothed me', 'in prison and ye came unto me'. These are all from the AV. We see Victorian scenes: there is a palm tree, the jailer has keys and the prisoner is chained amid straw, and in each a Victorian gentleman is dispensing charity.

The text reads: 'To the glory of God and in memory of Charles Thomas Willes deceased February 2nd MDCCCLXXVII aged LXVIII (1877, aged 68)'.

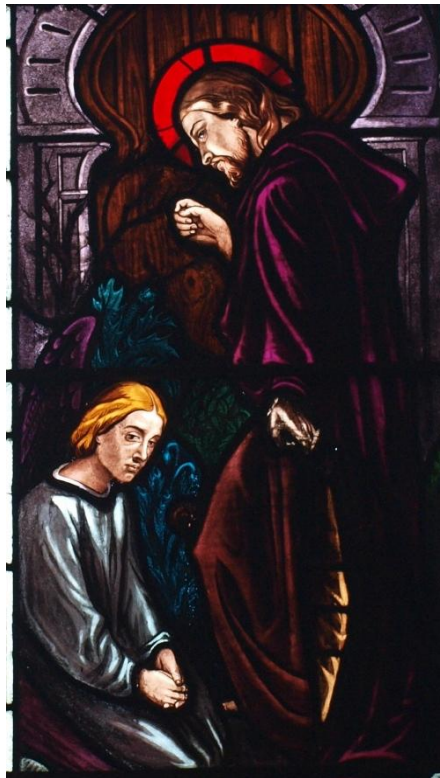
You will have noticed that six members of the Willes family are commemorated in the windows, so who were they? A brass plaque in the chancel records the burials of members of the family beneath the chancel floor. Among these are the four members of the family commemorated by the east window. Margarett was the wife of William Shippen. The William who died in 1865 was the husband of Sophia neé Cartwright of Aynho, who was responsible for the restoration in 1866. She is buried in the churchyard, nearest to the Manor House wall and the east wall of the churchyard. She died aged 89, in November 1896. One other grave is that of an eleven month old Edward Shippen Willes who died in February 1889.

The Willes family, who came from the villages south of Leamington Spa, bought the Manor House in King's Sutton in the early 18th century and built Astrop House, to the north-east of the village.

The first Willes here was Sir John (1685-1761) who was Attorney General in 1733 and later Chief Justice of the Common Pleas. He was the son of the Rector of Bishop's Itchington. One of his brothers was Bishop of S David's and later of Bath and Wells, and is buried in Westminster Abbey. Sir John's grandson, John Freke Willes died without issue and left his property here to a cousin, the Reverend William Shippen Willes who is one of those commemorated in the east window. He was a Prebendary of York, Rector of Preston Bissett in Bucks and, as patron, appointed himself as Vicar of King's Sutton. He was also perpetual curate of Cirencester and died there in 1822. He was twice married: firstly to Dorothea Capper in 1794, but she died the following year, and then to Margarett Williams of Panthowell in Carmarthenshire. They had a total of 14 children, 7 boys and 7 girls. The 3rd son was the William who married Sophia Cartwright. Edward, the 4th son, married Laura Steward of Myton in Warwickshire. Edward was also ordained. A fifth son was the Charles of the south aisle window, but the Mary Patience I have not yet been able to trace. The name Freke was derived from John's mother, who was Frances Freke of Bristol. The monument in the chancel is to her brother, Thomas Langton Freke.

ROGER BELLAMY

The figure of Christ in his glory – south aisle window



Detail from the window in the north aisle –
'Behold, I stand at the door and knock'