

31. Donors – In Stained Glass

The Siegfried von Gelnhausen and his wife panel is an excellent example of donor glass, but there are several others on display at the Burrell Collection, in a variety of materials. In this blog, we are going to look at some other examples of donors in stained glass.

As was mentioned in our blog on glass painting, The Beatrix van Valkenburgh panel is the earliest example of English donor glass in existence and the earliest surviving example of the Oxford School of Glass Painters.

Another fine example on display is the “Life of St. John the Evangelist” panels bought by Sir William Burrell from the collection at Costessey Hall, which comes from the Church of St. John in Rouen, now demolished, and dates to the 1st quarter of the 16C. It was part of much larger 8 light series (the other 5 are in Wells cathedral). It shows three scenes:

- St. John being boiled in oil.
- The writing of the Book of Revelation on the Island of Patmos (note the Book arriving from above in a shaft of light and the seven headed dragon from revelation 12. Below is St. John’s apostolic symbol – an eagle holding an inkpot in its beak.
- The raising of Drusianna to life. It shows a funeral procession with bearers in blue and purple robes emerging from a building with a bier from which a shrouded figure rises; St. John stands on the right, hand raised.

The donors are at bottom - they are the Bigar de la Londe family. They are arranged in what was the traditional order of importance at the time; fa-



BURRELL COLLECTION
BEATRIX VAN VALKENBURG



BURRELL COLLECTION – LIFE OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

ther, followed by two sons, mother, in yellow and four daughters, two in blue and two in red, and all coifed in black. The Bigar de la Londe family were important in Rouen and are recognisable by the colours of their red and white heraldic surcoats. Often, other heraldic emblems such as in the Siegfried von Gelnhausen panel would be included such as a shield, either with or without the actual donor being represented. I wonder whether we would have recognised them from their faces.

The Life of St John the Baptist is also from the Church of St John in Rouen; the church covered both John the Evangelist and John the Baptist. It shows four scenes:

The Vision of Zacharias: Zacharias is dressed as a priest in blue chasuble. He kneels within the altar

rails in the temple, a censer in his right hand, before the Tables of the Law and the Rod of Aaron; the Archangel in pink with green wings appears above the altar.

- The Visitation shows the Virgin Mary attended by five angels saluting Elizabeth in a landscape of green trees and castle beneath a burst of rayed light.
- Birth and naming of St John shows Elizabeth in red curtained bed and the infant St. John laid on a blue velvet cushion between two women and two men; in the centre foreground is a midwife and on left Zacharias with tablet inscribed IOHNES.



BURRELL COLLECTION – SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

- St John taking leave of his parents occurs at sunrise in a landscape with mill stream and towers among green trees; the saint in purple gown turns his head towards Zacharias and Elizabeth who are accompanied by a girl and youth.



"North West View of Blithfield; Staffordshire, the Seat of the Right Hon'ble, Lord Bagot," watercolour, by John Buckler (1770-1851) and John Chessell Buckler (1793-1894). 20 1/2in. (52.1cm). Courtesy of the Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

The donors in this window are unidentified, but are probably a wealthy Rouen merchant with his wife, son and daughter-in-law, and six grandchildren. These four lights and four others on display showing scenes from the life of St John the Baptist are presumed to have been brought to England by John Christopher Hampp in 1802. Hampp was a Norwich weaver and merchant, who travelled Europe buying stained glass windows which he brought back to Britain for sale to collectors. A significant proportion of the stained glass in museums and collections were saved thanks for Hampp.

From 1820 until 1946 the glass was in the windows of the long gallery on the first floor of Lord Bagot's home, Blithfield Hall.