

STAINED GLASS PANEL 45-92 St. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

Study of the panel by **Chris Walsh**

Statement of significance

Included in the extensive collection of medieval stained glass gifted to Glasgow Museums by Sir William Burrell is a 15th century panel from the parish church St Peter Mancroft, Norwich ^{fig 1}. It depicts the converted Jew receiving the palm from St John the Evangelist. It measures 679mm x 482mm and is stored in BC: 405 stained glass conservation store within the Burrell Collection, 2060 Pollokshaws road, Glasgow.

Throughout the Middle Ages Norwich maintained a high level of independence from the rest of England. Its great wealth came from the wool trade, attracting artists and tradesmen from Europe in seek of patronage. The resulting vast arrays of beautifully painted, sculpted and woven images are examples of pre-reformation art of the highest quality.

However these objects were not just popish images and icons, they hold intriguing clues, that when properly deciphered, tell us of the social, political and historical times that forged them

The window depicts a scene from the golden legend story, “The funeral of the Virgin Mary”¹. It is one of 30 panels that were originally in the north chancel chapel of St Peter Mancroft.(Appendix I.) During a period of the cities unrest in 1648 there was a clash between Puritans and Royalists which resulted in an explosion in a near by munitions store. Many lives were lost and the damage to the church included the destruction of the stained glass windows. Over the space of four years all the glass was painstakingly pieced together and installed to form the great east window. Only three of the original surviving windows are not in situ. The panel in question being one of those.

This panel represents a pinnacle of achievement in the medieval painting style known as “the Norwich School”. It contains many of the regional characteristics, such as the depiction of flint flooring and clifflets. Its design, painting and manufacture is of such quality it has been described as “...which other examples of Norwich glass-painting must be primarily compared”².

The window from which this panel originates was commissioned by Robert Toppes and was built by the John Wighton workshop in 1455.

Having held the office of sheriff, mayor and burgess, Robert Toppes was deeply embroiled in the politics of the city. The leopards’ faces that are painted upon the knights’ surcoat are a direct reference to the coat of arms of William De la Pole, Duke of Suffolk.

Toppes and De la Pole were of opposing political views, a city official and a royalist supporter respectively, and the representation of De la Pole as the converted Jew is seen as reconciliatory move to commemorate a visit in 1453 of Henry VI and a royal charter that reinstated the cities liberties following years of civil unrest.

The staff of the Wighton workshop is of social interest given that it reflects the cultural diversity of the city at that time. John Wighton was a respected alderman. His entourage included glazier William Mundeford from Utrecht ³. and interestingly, Mundeford’s English wife Helen was employed as a glazier. She was the only recorded female glazier in Medieval Norwich ⁴.

The congregation of St Peter Mancroft have great pride in their church and its fittings. It is a focal point of the community and an important expression of their cultural and religious identity.

The aesthetic, historical and social significance of this object is complex and layered, but it shows all of these attributes to a high degree. Aesthetic, in its execution, historical, in its association with a specific important moment in time and social with its links to the local community, then and now.



References

1. W.G. Ryan (trans), *Jacobus de Voragine, The Golden Legend* vol 2 Princeton 1993. Pg 81
2. C. Woodforde, *The Norwich School of Glass Painting of the 15th century*, London/New York/Toronto 1950
3. W.J. Drake, *A Dictionary of Glass painters and "Glasyers" of the 10th to 18th centuries*, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC 1955. Pg 157 and 101.
4. D. King, *The Medieval Stained Glass of St Peter Mancroft Norwich*, CVMA, Oxford University Press 2006. Appendix 1, Pg 138.

D. King's proposed reconstruction of the North Chancel Chapel window (nIII) *

The apostles Guard the tomb <i>Ryan p. 81</i> 6a	Jesus arrives at the tomb <i>Ryan p. 81-82</i> 6b	The assumption of the Virgin Mary <i>Ryan p. 82</i> 6c	The apostles in discussion with the missing apostle <i>Ryan p. 92</i> 6d	The apostles see the empty tomb <i>Ryan p. 92</i> 6e
The apostles carry the bier <i>Ryan p. 81</i> 5a	The funeral of the Virgin Mary arrested by a Jew <i>Ryan p. 81</i> 5b	The conversion of the Jew <i>Ryan p. 81</i> 5c	St john the evangelist hands the palm to the Jew <i>Ryan p. 81</i> 5d	The funeral of the Virgin Mary <i>Ryan p. 81</i> 5e
The annunciation of the death of the Virgin Mary <i>Ryan p. 78</i> 4a	The miraculous assembly of the apostles <i>Ryan p. 79</i> 4b	The Virgin Mary hands the palm to St John the evangelist <i>Ryan p. 79</i> 4c	The appearance of Jesus during the night <i>Ryan p. 79</i> 4d	The death of the Virgin Mary <i>Ryan p. 80</i> 4e
The circumcision <i>Luke II, 21</i> 3a	The presentation <i>Luke II, 22-40</i> 3b	Josephs dream <i>Mathew II, 13</i> 3c	The flight into Egypt <i>Mathew II, 14-15</i> 3d	The massacre of the innocents <i>Mathew II, 16-18</i> 3e
The annunciation <i>Luke I, 26-38</i> 2a	The visitation <i>Luke I, 39-56</i> 2b	The nativity <i>Luke II, 1-20</i> 2c	The adoration of the magi <i>Mathew II, 1-12</i> 2d	The adoration of the magi <i>Mathew II, 1-12</i> 2e
<i>Donor</i> 1a	<i>Donor</i> 1b	<i>Donor</i> 1c	<i>Donor</i> 1d	<i>Donor</i> 1e

- King has compiled this from various sources, although its worth noting that 3c,4d are of his own assumption. King p.clxix-clxxv