



FROM THE PARISH ARCHIVES
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The Stained Glass Windows

Welcome to the thirty-third edition of "From the Parish Archives". We hope that you will enjoy reading about the history of the Parish.

The "From the Parish Archives" aims to be factual. However, any opinions expressed are personal and may not be necessarily shared by other parishioners.

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Opening Comments

Much of the text concerning the Margaret and Paul pair, Cecilia and Samuel stained glass windows is the result of the research undertaken by Bronwyn Hughes Stained Glass Historian and Consultant. She visited Saint Margaret's in 2011 and her research is acknowledged. Information about the Resurrection Garden pair come from Marion Johnstone and this is also acknowledged..

Wikipedia states that the term "Stained Glass" can refer to coloured glass as a material or to works produced from it. As a material, stained glass is glass that has been coloured by adding metallic salts during its manufacture. The coloured glass is crafted into stained glass windows in which small pieces of glass are arranged to form patterns or pictures. These are traditionally held together by strips of lead and supported by a rigid frame. The term also applies to windows in which the colouring has been painted onto the glass and then fused to the glass in a kiln.

Again, Wikipedia claims that evidence of stained glass windows in churches and monasteries in Britain can be found as early as the 7thC. The earliest known reference dates from 675 AD when Benedict Biscop imported workmen from France to glaze the monastery of St Peter which he was building at Monwearmouth, Sunderland.

Nine hundred and eighty-six years later stained glass was included in a newly build church at Eltham Victoria called Saint Margaret's. These windows were manufactured by Victorian company called Ferguson and Urie. Specifically,

they refer to the windows with a gold border and the “small window” behind the altar. They are still intact today although some of the “gold” windows have been replaced with more elaborate stained glass. These are the Saint Margaret and Saint Paul pair, Saint Cecilia, Samuel and the Resurrection Garden pair.

The Small Window

At the 17 May 1861 church committee meeting, it delegated to the building sub-committee the task of obtaining a stained glass window for the temporary north wall of the newly built church. On the 3 June 1861 a patterned window costing £1 was ordered from Ferguson and Urie. This company became famous around Melbourne in the 1880s but had a history of manufacture going back to the 1850s. They also made all the other windows with a gold border installed in Saint Margaret’s in 1861.

On the 22 November Ferguson and Urie wrote to the church committee with the good news that the windows were ready except for the small one at the end. In regards to the latter it states that *the production of imitation glass for the small end window as being the first in the colony*. Previous to this time all stained glass windows were imported from England so the “altar window” as it is now known is Australian made.

Apart from the great spiritual significance of the Altar window it is historically important. It dates from the construction of the church in 1861 and has state and national importance because of its age. It is also architecturally important because it was made by Ferguson and Urie, an Australian company now recognised for their skilled and complicated designs.

Saint Margaret and Saint Paul

The windows of St. Margaret and St. Paul were installed in 1918. The faculty was issued on the 31 January 1918 during the ministry of the Revd. Thomas Henry Sapsforth. No letters have been unearthed regarding the commissioning of this window but Mrs. Scarce paid an account of £63.0.0, issued on 24 January 1918 [Montgomery ledger folio 112. The dedication of the windows took place with the unveiling of the Honour Board for The Great European War on the 16 March 1918.

The pair of windows were the gifts of local residents and family of the late Mr and Mrs Walter Wippell. The windows were unveiled by Archdeacon Hayman. The stained glass depicts St Margaret, Queen of Scotland who was canonised in 1250 AD. Its pair depicts Saint Paul the apostle. They bear the inscription: “To the glory of God and in living memory of Walter and Elvira Wippell. Erected by their children”.

The window was designed by William Montgomery. He emigrated from Newcastle-on-Tyne to Port Philip (Victoria) in 1886. In the years that followed he designed and installed many stained glass windows in churches and stately homes across Australia. His designs were often elaborate and extensive. He died on the 5 July 1927.

Saint Cecilia

The memorial on the Saint Cecilia window reads “Sacred to the memory of Caroline Ada Wingrove. Erected by relatives and friends. Obit May 25 1919”. The faculty was issued on the 28 February 1920 during the ministry of the Revd, Thomas Henry Sapsforth.

The Rev. Sapsford was sent a coloured sketch of St. Cecilia ‘for memorial window to Miss Wingrove’ on 10 October 1919, with a quote of 35 guineas [NGA Letterbook 1/933]. The unveiling and dedication took place on 5 June 1920 [E&WSA&DCVA, 18 June 1920, p.3]. A third Montgomery letter, dated 10 December 1919 [NGA Letterbook 1/959], noted Montgomery’s pleasure that the unveiling went well and was clearly a response to Rev. Sapsford regarding the provision of a wire guard, which was not part of the original quote. ‘I think that a guard spoils the appearance of a window from an artistic point of view, and I noticed when at St. Helena, that although guards were provided for the other windows, they had never been fixed.’ Two accounts were sent: £29.10.0 on 1 December 1919, paid by cheque on 6 January 1920 [Montgomery ledger, folio 137] and 14 June 1920 for £35.0.0 [folio 142]. It seems likely that they were for St. Cecelia and St. Katherine, for St. Katherine’s, St. Helena. Montgomery also designed and made St. Michael (1919) for St. Helena.

Interestingly, although it appears it did not eventuate, Fanny Withers, widow of the painter Walter Withers and an old friend of Montgomery’s, enquired about a window for St. Margaret’s in November 1922. Montgomery replied with a quote of 50 guineas for window with a single figure and 62 guineas for group subjects [NGA Letterbook 4/775]. It seems an odd way to price windows, but it required so much more glass painting for the second option.

Samuel

The memorial reads “In memory of Samuel Shelmerdine. Erected by his loving wife 1955”. A faculty was issued on the 27 April 1954 during the ministry of the Revd. John Fenton Gibbins.

The Boy Samuel window was ordered from Brooks, Robinson & Co. in June 1955 by the Rev. Gibbins. It was measured at 88 1/2 x 19 7/8 inches. The cartoon (full-scale drawing) of the figure was supplied to the firm by William Mathieson. His stained glass firm, Mathieson & Gibson, had ceased to operate in about 1952, but orders still came in from previous clients and others. Mathieson (Gibson had retired by this stage) would take the cartoons to Brooks, Robinson who made them up for the clients. The ornament - that is the architectural canopy at the top, the borders and base – was also supplied by Mathieson. This information was sourced from the two volumes of job books that survived when Brooks, Robinson & Co. closed in the mid-1960s.

The Melbourne firm Henry Brooks & Co. was founded in 1854 by young Henry Brooks, an importer of window glass, paints and wallpaper, an agency of

Henry Brooks & Co Export Merchants, London. The firm quickly expanded into a wide range of imports, including windows, before opening their own stained glass manufactory some years later. By 1888 Brooks Robinson & Co was listed under 'Glass Stainers' in the Melbourne Sands & MacDougall directory, although earlier examples of their work have been identified. A measure of their emergent reputation was the selection of the firm to install the windows in St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral, Melbourne, which were made by Clayton & Bell in London. Brooks Robinson & Co. stained glass department was eventually closed in about 1966.

The Resurrection Pair

The memorial reads "To the glory of God and for Anne Johnstone who died on 29th June 1975. Aged 21 years". Tragically Anne was killed in a road accident and with are grateful for details about Annie, as she was known to the family, provided very recently by her sister Marion. We are permitted to publish them here:

My sister Anne (Annie) was a second year student nurse at the Alfred hospital. She was only 21 when she died as the result of a car accident. We were parishioners of St Margaret's at the time, and lived in Lower plenty. My mother came up with the idea of a stained glass window in Annie's memory, and I had seen a sign outside a house in Warranwood (just north of where the Shell petrol station is now) advertising Stained glass windows by Uldis Balodis. I told Mum and she made contact with him. As I recall, he was a national of Lithuania. They sat down together to work out the theme. My mother chose Mary Magdalene to represent Anne as she felt she was the strongest and most tangibly human female character in the bible. It was really the character, rather than the scene that was chosen. I remember Uldis explaining how the windows would be so bright because they would be stained glass rather than the more traditional painted glass. As the glass would be transparent, they would allow all the light to shine through. Ian Brown was our vicar at the time, and he put in the application to the Archbishop to erect the windows. They must have been put in in late 1975 or 1976.

We do indeed have the faculty for this beautiful memorial that is much appreciated by visitors and parishioners alike. It was issued on the 30 September 1975 during the ministry of the Revd. Ian Frederick Brown.

Postscript

The parish of Saint Margret's value its stained glass windows greatly. On the 21 March 2000, Geoffrey Wallace Stained Glass Company closely inspected all the windows. It made recommendations for their restoration, where needed. This was duly undertaken with the assistance of heritage funds.