

THE SCOTTISH STAINED GLASS SYMPOSIUM AND TRUST

*Updated version of a paper given at the Church Service Society
Study Day at Kippen Parish Church on 15th September 2011*

Alison M. Robertson

During the year, while attending lectures organised by the Royal Society of Arts in Edinburgh, I heard an outstanding speaker, Dr Mechtild Rossler, a cultural geographer qualified also in landscape studies and the history of planning. Based in Paris, Dr Rossler oversees hundreds of UNESCO heritage sites throughout Europe and North America and brings wide experience to community-based projects of every possible sort. Dr Rossler pointed to the importance of cultural landscapes, including sacred sites and special places such as the one we are in today, noting the complex interaction between places and people, and the overlapping natures of tangible and intangible heritage (of both of which stained glass is a prime example). Her lecture prompted me to think from a new angle about fresh and viable ways of making our stained glass heritage, and its related spiritual significances, available to all: a thought that would not go away, and seemed particularly germane in our churches at a time when we are trying to strengthen community involvement and draw people back into our community of faith.

You do not need me to tell you that the stained glass in our churches and elsewhere is laden with religious references, social and cultural *mores* and beliefs, emblems, symbols, iconography, literary and Classical references, memorials, natural phenomena, tools, trades, pastimes, music, human experiences and emotions, and so on; perhaps especially so in Scotland where multiple denominations, successful industrial development, world trade and related wealth, a well-educated populace interested in commissioning artworks, and a measure of artistic freedom unconstrained (in the Presbyterian churches) by prescribed Saints' Days and other religious conventions, made for a spectacular flowering of stained glass art from, say, the 1860s to the present day in a religious, but also in a secular, context.

Perhaps you will glimpse and apply some of these themes from the following

snapshots through which we may observe the Scottish Stained Glass Symposium at work, using recent examples.

1. CONSERVATION

a. Conservation of Originals: The art and craftsmanship in Alf Webster's windows in Glasgow's Lansdowne Church near the Kelvin Bridge – the Templeton window (1913) in the North Transept and the McCowan window (1914) in the South transept – is equal to, and arguably surpasses, the best art anywhere in Europe. His tragic death in 1915 at the front line while serving with the 1st Battalion the Gordon Highlanders ended the possibility of further works from this creative genius. The McCowan window in particular reveals not only the breadth of his intellect and theological understanding (doubtless gained in part through his membership of the Glasgow Ecclesiological Society), but also his qualities of sensitivity, imagination, and honesty, whose devastating - or elevating - affect is played out with consummate skill through his drawing, colour-selections, glass-work and craftsmanship. The Pilgrim Trust enabled the down-taking of this window by Cannon-MacInnes. It is presently stored in the church while the Four Acres Charitable Trust, and members and friends of Lansdowne toil endlessly to raise the money for its restoration. In his fully illustrated book, *A Notable Ornament*,¹ Gordon Urquhart recounts the history of this church, with fascinating supporting documentation. There is a chapter largely devoted to Alf Webster. The restoration of his South window, and the preservation of his North window (which is still in place) are aspirations that, as a nation, Scotland cannot afford to leave unfulfilled. The Symposium and Trust are unfortunately not able to give financial support, but they do try to give moral support and to raise awareness about this worthy cause.

b. Conservation of Artistic Integrity: Preservation of Light: Early in 2011, an almighty *cri de coeur* came to the Symposium from St Andrew's United Reformed Church in Frogna Lane, Hampstead, in London. The effectiveness of their pair of twin-light First World War Memorial windows by Douglas Strachan (1875-1950) was threatened by a Planning Application for a five storey development close to the windows, that would rob them of much of their light, thereby effectively destroying their message and import. Douglas Strachan's art ranks alongside that of Alf Webster as outstanding, though he is arguably even more distinguished thanks to his much more prolific

output achieved during a much longer working life. Hasty research in the few remaining days before the Planning Committee's meeting was aided by A.C. Russell's catalogue *Stained Glass Windows of Douglas Strachan*², which revealed that this church holds the last remaining Douglas Strachan glass in London, all of his other work in London (at The Guildhall, St Columba's, St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster School) having been bombed in the Second World War. By email, we received a picture of the two lights, one of Abraham and David in the red colour-spectrum, and one of Christ and his Crucifixion, together with WWI soldiers with their weaponry and shovels, in the blue spectrum. These facts, combined with logical deductions founded on a general awareness of the ways in which artists use light, aspect, colour and so on in creating stained glass informed a telling and tough letter sent by us to the Camden Planning Authority. A dozen or so significantly knowledgeable and experienced members in the Symposium were also hastily supplied with a copy, and urged to write immediately in their own vein to press the points home. Many others elsewhere in a variety of organisations in and around London (e.g. BSMGP, The Glaziers' Company, and the Victorian Society *et al*) were doing the same. The upshot was that a few days later we heard the Planning Application had been turned down!

The Developers appealed against the refusal of Planning permission and were again turned down. They then appealed against the failure of their Appeal and so a Reporter was appointed. I travelled to London for the Reporter's Inspection. There I met representatives from St Andrew's Church and other interested bodies, as well as local homeowners who had additional objections. The local press was out in force and somewhat astonished to find someone had made a round trip of 800 miles on account of their local windows. The outcome was that the Reporter supported the local authority's refusal of the Appeal by the Developers, and so the Strachan supporters won! There it rests in September 2012. However, the Developers, Gapland Ltd Gapland Ltd (*sic*), still own the neighbouring building and will no doubt try again with a new scheme. As my music teacher once said, when instructing me on the importance of re-tuning my harpsichord during a concert, 'Constant vigilance is required'!

c. Conservation of Concept: Authentic Replacement: New for Old: Historic Scotland recently oversaw a restoration of the Royal Apartments in Stirling Castle. Linda Cannon and Rab MacInnes of Cannon-MacInnes obtained the stained glass contract, which was to replace all the missing glass

containing Coats of Arms of Mary of Guise and others. They reported to the Symposium on their visit to North East France to research armorial bearings of that period. The restoration involved the creation of 54 new heraldic windows in the style of 1543. Linda and Rab completed the whole project in 18 months of unrelenting toil (2010-11). 26 of the windows related to Mary of Guise and 24 to King James V. There were 152 panels in all and 156 quarry panels. This work succeeds other Coats of Arms undertaken by two other Scottish stained glass artists, Crear McCartney and Dugald McIntosh in 1999 in the Great Hall of Stirling Castle. Our Symposium noticed that little if any publicity is given to this stained glass work by Historic Scotland, or in Stirling Castle's literature. Staff on duty seem to be ignorant of who the artists were. Please help to raise awareness if you can.

2. KNOWLEDGE-SHARING

a. Knowledge-sharing: Research and Filing: Every time new information comes through, or if, as for Stirling Castle, we receive pictures, the ambition is to file it in the computer under various heads, as well as recording it in one of our regular reports. Thus, the Lansdowne window is listed under Glasgow Lansdowne Church of Scotland and under Artist (Alf Webster) and in the Windows Register (on an Excel Spreadsheet). If we hit a problem, for example a missing piece of information, we can search (in the computer) Rona Moody's unpublished research on Scotland's stained glass art and artists (a very substantial document containing the fruits of a lifetime's research, which she graciously shares with us) entitled *Stained Glass in Scotland*.³ Or we can search another Register, this one compiled by my assistant secretary, Jenifer Davidson, containing every stained glass reference from *1000 Churches to Visit*;⁴ or look in other lists and files. In theory, we do the same for each piece of information that comes in. In practice, we are well behind, as we cannot keep pace due to ever-increasing amounts of information. And it is not always so simple, either. Sometimes, a picture file won't open; or can't be saved; or we can't find it because we have changed its name from the name it came in on, and have not kept a note of the date or sender of the email; or (occasionally in the early days) we have forgotten to copy a numbered picture file (say 007!) into a version that carries the name of the place or artist - resulting in a picture we can no longer identify (infuriating!). We had no idea, eight years ago, that we would ever have pictures in the computer, never mind incoming information and images whose volume would grow

exponentially. It is tough but rewarding work as one pours over the computer – finding, pinning down and entering data; and checking, checking: ‘How do you know it is by so and so? Who said? How does she know?’ You get the drift, I am sure. As yet the logical outcome from this archiving process, namely the business of examining, extracting, ordering and listing the many elements of tangible and intangible heritage contained within the windows, simply does not happen: surely an Aladdin’s cave of riches for a future PhD student if we ever manage to find and fund one?

b. Knowledge-sharing: Inventories: Two of our most knowledgeable members, both of them inspirational in their own way, Iain Gabraith and Tom Honey, have been kind and trusting enough to pass on their archives to the Symposium and Trust. These archives are proving to be a minefield of information. One example is Iain’s book containing 144 pictures from twelve of these calendars, an eclectic mix of his favourite stained glass windows from all over Scotland. Iain’s material is very well documented. However, one can have surprises, as for example, here at Kippen, where an image of his, familiar to me, of a pelican feeding her young from her own breast turns out to be in a dainty two inch square near the base of Herbert Hendrie’s large Nativity window (whereas I had imagined it as much larger). Hendrie’s daughter Susan Taylor, with whom I am in touch, has explained that her father created and gave that window in thanksgiving for her birth. Along with hundreds of other A4 sized photographs from Iain Galbraith comes accompanying text giving historical and art history background. At present, when dealing with an enquiry, such as, ‘Does Kippen Kirk have any Bible references in its windows?’ I can delve into these books for information, usually on my knees on the study floor! Tom Honey’s articles and images likewise provide information sources, particularly with regards to the Presbytery of Ayr, where he has made a full record of stained glass. His works on Gordon Webster (father of one of our trustees Prof. Robin Webster) and Sadie McLellan are also invaluable. By September 2012 these archives (and much else) were being scanned and digitised under the *aegis* of our current Pilot Project to create a National Register of Stained Glass in Scotland. In this Project, twelve suitably skilled volunteers are entering data we have issued to them into an Excel Spreadsheet devised by postgraduate student Francesca Baseby (who works for us on some Saturday mornings) and myself. The spreadsheet is really a chart with 27 labelled columns, with one entry per work of stained glass art. It would take another talk to explain it all! Basically

we hope to list at least 5,000 stained glass artworks in the next year, with a view to seeking funding for the creation of an Online Database Register consisting of a 'Master' Read-only Register and a Public Access Register to which entries may be added by the public/user. This should greatly facilitate searches through the use of the 'Ctrl F' tool in the computer (for those who do 'computer-speak').

c. Knowledge-sharing: Monk Signatures: A recent enquiry came from Dr Richard Fawcett, lately of Historic Scotland, who was seeking the artist of a particular window in Mortlach Church for information he is compiling for the *Buildings of Scotland* (the North East) Publication. The window carries the emblem of a monk in a habit. Rona Moody's unpublished research (*ibid.*) and *Stained Glass Marks and Monograms*⁵ published by NADFAS, revealed that there are six forms of monk used as signatures! It was then a case of researching which artists use which form of monk. Eventually it became clear that the artist sought at Mortlach was James Powell. Dr Fawcett has since sent us his complete list of windows and artists in Mortlach, which has many other James Powell windows, but also one each by Daniel Cottier and Sax Shaw. This information will all be transferred into our files in due course. This is a small example of how co-operation can bring benefits in terms of knowledge to both participants.

3. RECORDING

a. Recording in Film Project: of Crear McCartney and Dugald McIntosh creating a pair of windows for Black Mount Parish Church, Dolphinton

This is a small stand-alone country church on an ancient religious site just south of West Linton, Peebleshire. A joint project between ourselves and the School of Scottish Studies of Edinburgh University (and initially funded by them in kind) has been running since 2008, interrupted by several substantial illnesses on the part of all four participants, and the sad, premature death in December 2009 of the photographer from the School, Ian MacKenzie. By September 2012 sufficient funding had been found for two DVDs. One will show all the processes of making this pair of windows, which marks the coming together at Black Mount Church of four former congregations. The second DVD, broader in scope, will cover the life and work of Crear McCartney, and will include images of some of his outstanding work,

for example at St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall, and St Michael's Church, Linlithgow. Associated research into this notable Scottish artist includes an ambition to identify and list chronologically the scores of windows he has created all over Scotland; discussions with him about the creative process, including the influence on his work of Czech music (heard in his boyhood at nearby Wiston Camp where his father took him to hear Masses held for the many Polish men billeted there during the War); and a developing awareness of his immense Biblical knowledge gained through hearing the Bible read during silent meal times at Pluscarden Abbey where he lived and taught stained glass for five years (though not as a monk). Although still not finished due to assorted unavoidable delays, the digitising of his large collection of slides is complete, and the development of his catalogue is proceeding apace. We hope to finish the DVDs this year (2012) and that they will eventually be for sale in aid of the Symposium and the Ian MacKenzie Memorial Fund for Travelling Photographic Exhibitions using local photographs.

b. Recording: SSGS and NADFAS: Scotland's 'Churches at Risk' Project

Whenever we hear of stained glass at risk, due to decay, lack of funds, changes of building-use and so on, we notify Bobbie Smith of NADFAS, who heads up this scheme. NADFAS Scotland kindly funds the work using its own members as volunteers to visit and record the stained glass. All of the information gleaned is copied to us in text and image, which we then add to our files. This we greatly appreciate. This project can only run in buildings that are still in the hands of the church. Church buildings that have been sold are not eligible. Again, it is not just the art works we would hate to lose, but also the cultural heritage contained therein, not forgetting the emotional ties to, for example, war memorial windows.

c. Recording: The Scottish War Memorials Project (SWMP)

Volunteer researchers and photographers visit appropriate sites, identify, record, and make available photographs on their website www.scottishwarmemorials.co.uk. Paul Goodwin, the Forum Moderator for Dumfries and Galloway, now photographs any stained glass that he comes across and sends us copies. He also points out that The War Memorial Trust has two grant funds in Scotland, which can be applied to stained glass if it is a War Memorial. He has become so interested in the windows that he now gives slide shows on stained glass in south west Scotland!

Where we are now: More and more people are becoming interested in stained glass. Where congregations promote the glass in their church, interested members of the public (whether of religious persuasion or not) are drawn into the building. That must surely make it easier for them to come back again – maybe next time for the Gospel as well as the glass! Those who have realised, one way or another, that this creative heritage really matters need to be passionate about it, on behalf of all the others who may not have recognised it for what it is. Almost every time I have a conversation about our stained glass in Scotland, someone present reveals some sort of interest in it: a window they love, one they remember from childhood, one their neighbour or grandfather made, one that is missing (presumed dead) and mourned, one they still enjoy. This widening interest is enabling us to find more volunteers to research the glass and to contribute to our overall knowledge of it. But we still have a long way to go to gather all the facts. And the study and evaluation of the tangible and intangible heritage therein has barely started at all. But it will!

Since 2003, the Symposium and Trust have been ably and loyally supported by our Chair, Professor John Hume, by our Trustees, and by well over 200 individuals and other organisations now on our mailing list. Our unofficial motto about Scotland's stained glass is, 'We Care and We Share'. If this is a bug, then I hope you catch it!

Two leaflets – on the Scottish Stained Glass Symposium and the Churches at Risk Project – were issued at Kippen. Copies of both are still available from the writer by email at Scotstainedglass@aol.com

Alison M. Robertson, 3 Ross Gardens, Edinburgh, EH9 3BS Scotstainedglass@aol.com

Hon. Secy, The Scottish Stained Glass Symposium and Trust: Scottish Charity SC039375

- 1 Gordon Urquhart *A Notable Ornament* Four Acres Charitable Trust and Glasgow City Heritage Trust, UK, 2011 www.glasgowheritage.org.uk
- 2 A.C. Russell *The Stained Glass of Douglas Strachan* Pinkfoot Press, Balgavies, Forfar
- 3 Unpublished: Rona Moody *Stained Glass in Scotland: A List of Artists and Studios with Stained Glass in Scotland*, 2010 list. Copy for research purposes held by the Scottish Stained Glass Symposium and Trust, Charity No. SC039375

- 4 Scotland's Churches Scheme *1000 Churches to Visit in Scotland* NMS Enterprises Ltd – Publishing 2005; now published in smaller sections according to selected areas of Scotland
- 5 Compiler Joyce Little, Editors Angela Goedicke and Margaret Washbourne *Stained Glass Marks and Monograms*, 2002, National Association of Decorative and Fine Art Societies. Charity Nos 1089743 (England & Wales) SC039240 (Scotland)

AN INTERFAITH AND ECUMENICAL GATHERING FOR SYRIA

St Giles' Cathedral, 30th October 2012

The Very Rev Dr Finlay A.J. Macdonald
(*Additional material, Douglas Galbraith*)

How it came about

On Sunday 5th August, in the course of a sermon preached in St Giles' Cathedral, I made reference to the civil war in Syria. The following day I received an e-mail from a member of the congregation asking about links between the Church of Scotland and Christians in Syria and, more generally, about the engagement of western churches with the crisis there. I shared the e-mail with the Secretary of the World Mission Council and from that sharing and follow-up discussions with others emerged the idea of an ecumenical and interfaith 'Gathering for Syria'. This was envisaged as a national event for Scotland, to be attended by members of civic and faith communities and with the aim of expressing solidarity with the people of Syria. While an initiative of the Church of Scotland, the Gathering was also supported by the Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association and the City of Edinburgh Council. It took place in St Giles' Cathedral on the evening of Tuesday 30 October. It was a sombre and reflective occasion facilitated by appropriate readings, reflections, prayers and music. Some two hundred people attended.