

Stained Glass Window Refurbishment - 2005 March



The stained glass windows in the south aisle of the church are among the many beautiful things in our church. Experts tell us that the north aisle windows are better crafted, but in the south aisle the pictures of the parables in rich and vivid colours give us a warm reminder of the central teaching of the gospels.

The southern aspect lights the windows brightly, but over the years the sun caused the leads to deteriorate badly. In 2004 it was realised if the repairs were delayed any longer the panes would begin to crack as the windows, already bowed and leaking, sagged further. The surrounding masonry was also suffering from rainwater leakage. Advice was sought, and after consultation it was decided to ask Chapel Studios, recommended specialists, to quote for a programme of repair. The quotation and their programme were accepted, the diocese agreed and the repair programme started.

Ribbed plastic windows were put in as a temporary replacement.

Visit to the Chapel Studio

A small group of us went to visit the Chapel Studio in a village, King's Langley, near Hemel Hempstead, on Tuesday 31st May 2005, where stained glass experts were restoring our east end windows, having already repaired and replaced all the south aisle windows. It was a great chance to see a renowned stained glass restorer at work.

The workshop was, as you might have worked out, in an old non conformist chapel. It is small but well set out and organized. The studio owner was away but his deputy showed us around and talked us through the various processes used.

The first stage was to take a rubbing of the whole window on an enormous sheet of tracing paper so that the lines of lead were easy to see. Then the window is disassembled and each piece of glass is laid on the corresponding shape on the tracing paper. A craftsman then gets new lead, (in various different thicknesses), and he shapes and fashions it into the exact shapes of the original. The glass meanwhile has been very carefully cleaned and is put piece by piece back in its place like a giant jig saw. Finally, we saw a man rubbing on some very gloopy brown stuff which gets into all the crevices a bit like polyfiller for glass I suppose.

Of course my description is very lacking in technical detail, (and correctness I suspect), but I hope you get the general idea. Luckily we had Jack Gostling with us and he asked pertinent questions, because he knows what he's talking about when it comes to most things connected with buildings. All the people at the studios were very engrossed with their very exacting work but took time to show and explain it. We all felt really pleased that our windows have been so lovingly restored in the hands of highly skilled craftspeople, who very clearly enjoy their work and put in a lot of TLC as well as time.

It was an interesting morning out but there was one complaint from Jack - I thought it might be about my driving or my navigation but No! It was the fact that sadly, as we all needed to be home by lunchtime, we had no time for a drink in the nearby pleasant looking pub! *Liz Butler, The Spire Magazine - 2005 July*

