

Bronwyn Hughes
The Art of Light:
a survey of stained glass in Victoria

Introduction

Stained glass is an architectural art. It came into being as an adjunct to worship in the Western Christian church, and reached its apotheosis in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries as an integral part of the great cathedral age of European Gothic. Thanks to the invention of the flying buttress, soaring walls of stone could now be pierced by tall openings and filled with vibrantly coloured and painted glass made by skilled medieval craftsman, as we can still see today at Chartres or Canterbury. However, by the seventeenth century it was an impoverished and degraded version of a once fine art; by the eighteenth century, it was almost extinct and considered to be virtually a 'lost art'. Despite Puritanism, Reformation, Counter-Reformation, revolution and war, a few antiquarian connoisseurs and a handful of makers kept stained glass alive, if not quite kicking.

In nineteenth-century Britain, a return to the so-called 'true principles' of church architecture and a revitalisation of liturgy and worship created a new awareness of stained glass and its design and manufacture in the manner of the Middle Ages. Hundreds of new parish churches were built, the majority in the Gothic Revival style, to accommodate the growing population in towns and suburbs created by industrial England.¹

When Britain colonised Australia by transporting men and women from Britain's overflowing gaols, it also transported a form of British society, culture and administration. Thus it was not surprising that, as the colonies grew with the arrival of free settlers in the first half of the nineteenth century, church building would embrace the Gothic Revival as the accepted style of architecture and that stained glass would inevitably be one element of its ornamentation.

Early Stained Glass in Victoria

By the late 1850s the economic and cultural centre of Australia was already changing. The discovery of gold at Clunes in 1851 was quickly followed by much larger, commercially viable findings across central Victoria. Once word spread, excited immigrants began to pour into the country in huge numbers, raising the Victorian population from 77,345 in 1851 to more than 230,000 three years later. Among them were architects, builders, artists and tradesmen, many of whom stayed and settled in a new land.

This abrupt and defining upheaval would result in a creation of wealth that allowed rapid expansion, and quickly changed Melbourne from a tent and shanty town to one with solid bluestone foundations sprouting grand civic, ecclesiastical and residential buildings.² Australian architecture received new and vigorous life, and stained glass, a

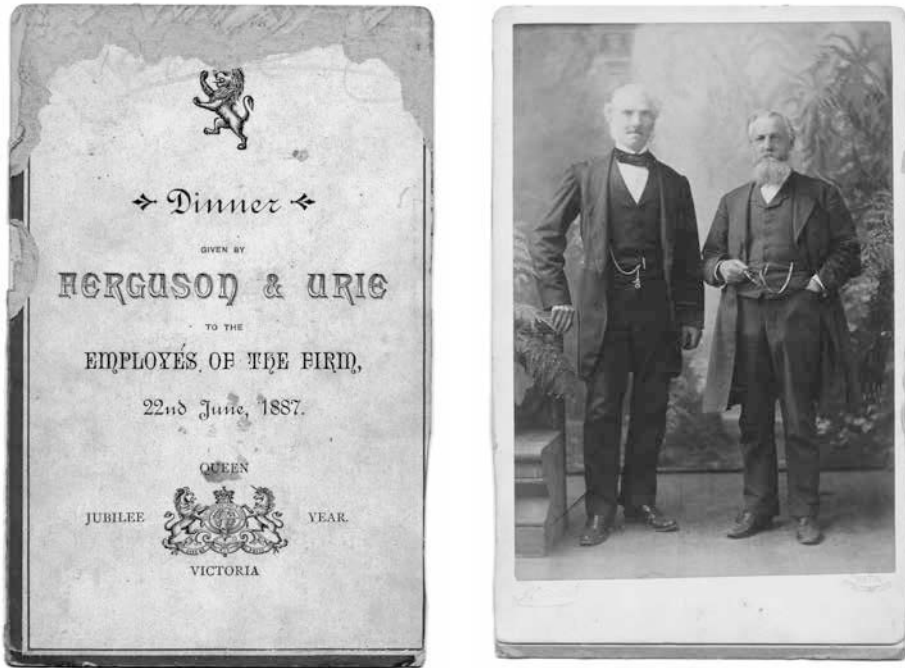
luxury formerly unaffordable for the middle-class, could become an integral part of the new building 'boom', and be perfectly acceptable in mansions of the wealthy and public institutions as it was in the colony's churches. From its earliest beginnings, Melbourne was a town that thrived on commerce and trade and it was about to fully develop its potential and become the financial and cultural centre of the country.³

Not surprisingly, when churches could afford to install fully painted stained glass they naturally turned to established and well-recognised British firms such as John Hardman & Co. of Birmingham, Clayton & Bell of London, and, to a lesser extent, firms from European studios.⁴

However, very shortly after the discovery of gold, enterprising businessmen turned their attention to the possibilities of developing a local market. In Melbourne, a pair of canny Scots, James Ferguson (1818–1894) and James Urie (1828–1890), opened a business in Hotham, now North Melbourne, as 'Painters, Glaziers, Plumbers and Paperhangers' shortly after their arrival in 1852.⁵ Both partners were trained as slaters and glaziers, trades that would become highly sought after in a time of escalating construction, and less than a year after their arrival, the firm had expanded by adding 'stained glass' to their range of offerings.⁶ By late 1854, Ferguson & Urie was sufficiently established to exhibit in the Victorian Exhibition of that year and were awarded certificates for both 'plumber's work' and 'stained windows'.⁷ Unfortunately no description of their award-winning glass has survived, but it may have been relatively simple, as a notice in the *Argus* in August 1853 advertised 'lead lattice windows for churches and cottages', possibly a simple form of leadlight.⁸

Many church windows were quite modest, especially in country areas where communities erected small churches and resorted to plain glazing in the first instance, possibly hoping for generous donors in future years. This was the case at St Peter's Anglican Church at Merino, one of a number of village churches in the Western District erected through the benefactions of the Henty family. In May 1866, Ferguson & Urie wrote to Francis Henty with quotes for the window openings in the church under construction; Cathedral glass, a superior rolled sheet glass, was estimated at £64 and the thinner ground glass at £48 and 'either sort to have coloured borders if wished'.⁹ The Rev. Cusack Russell favoured Cathedral glass and coloured borders, a view that prevailed ultimately over those of both the donor and the architect, James D. Fox of Hamilton.¹⁰

The models for these windows were readily available through pattern books, such as one produced by English glass makers Chance Brothers in 1863, *Church Windows: a series of designs, original or selected from ancient examples*.¹¹ Marketed as 'a simple and practical guide to those who require Ornamental Glass for the purpose of Church Decoration' in colour, and drawn to full size, the images of diamond quarries and borders could easily be selected by either maker or client. The use of pattern books was a common practice among architects of the nineteenth century and considered acceptable for particular elements of architecture including stained glass.



James Ferguson and James Urie on the occasion of the firm's dinner to mark Queen Victoria's Jubilee, 1887. Courtesy of Ray Brown and Errol Vincent

Ferguson & Urie clearly had ambitions to move beyond mere reproduction and recruited two artist/glass painters who were well versed in the High Victorian stained glass style and whose abilities would significantly enhance the firm's growing reputation and bring it to greater prominence. Glasgow-trained John Lamb Lyon (1835–1916) joined the firm in 1862, after a six-year employment at Ward & Hughes, one of the large and successful London firms of the period. The firm became Ferguson, Urie & Lyon when he was soon made a partner. He remained a vital member of the business in Melbourne until 1873.¹² Cumbrian David Relph Drape (1821–1882) joined the firm not long after Lyon with a reputation as church decorator, architect and artist in addition to his skills in stained glass. Before coming to Melbourne both men were connected with the gold mining town of Maldon in Central Victoria, where Drape designed the Anglican Church (among other buildings) and Lyon, son of a local storekeeper, is believed to have designed the church's west window that was made by Ferguson & Urie.¹³

As early as 1862 the theatrical entrepreneur George Selth Coppin (1819–1906) commissioned a grand three-light window for his new Apollo Music Hall in the Haymarket Theatre in Bourke Street in Melbourne.¹⁴ It received prominence in advertisements for the opening on Saturday 5 July 1862, which noted proudly, 'The Stained Glass Windows, By Messrs. Ferguson and Urie, are excellent specimens of colonial manufacture.'¹⁵ These

were so far in advance of the earlier windows by Ferguson & Urie in scale, design and execution that it is reasonable to assume that the new partner, John Lyon, was the principal artist. In 1960 the window was bequeathed to the State Library of Victoria where it was installed originally in a south-facing stairwell and then, after several years in storage, was reinstated in the sixth-floor annulus of the domed, now the La Trobe, reading room in 2005.¹⁶ The 'Shakspere' window can be regarded as among the first of the firm's significant windows.

Other examples from the same period continue a peculiarly Victorian form of *grisaille* that used geometric and stylised vegetal forms to create rhythmic patterns in vibrantly coloured glass, already seen in the west window at Maldon and also a three-light east window at St Paul's, Bakery Hill, in the gold rush town of Ballarat.¹⁷ It was also adapted for residential use, as seen in the entrance to Sir Samuel Wilson's Gothic style homestead Longeronong, near Horsham, in the same year.¹⁸ It was far from the grey and white of the original Cistercian *grisaille* of the twelfth century, and would become a style at which Ferguson & Urie excelled. Acknowledged as among the best examples of this type was the east window for St James' Old Cathedral, West Melbourne, the gift of the Dean of Melbourne, the Very Rev. Hussey Burgh Macartney, installed in 1883.¹⁹ The Palladian window interwove a mix of complex symbolism and texts within the decorative features of the style, making a significant addition to the spare Colonial Georgian architecture of the building.

As well as designs from pattern books, paintings, prints and illustrations were commonly adopted as the basis for stained glass designs, a practice not seen then as inappropriately un-original as it would be today. The design for the Apollo Music Hall's 'Shakspere' window, for instance, was an interpretation of Louis Francois Roubillac's 1745 sculpture of the bard and almost certainly a third-hand adaptation from a journal illustration. One of the firm's most successful series of windows showed illustrations of Christ's life and passion that were taken from a book of line drawings and texts, *The Pictorial Catechism*, published in 1861.²⁰ In the Intercolonial Exhibition of 1866 held in Melbourne, the firm exhibited an Early English chancel complete with illuminations and five windows based on the life of Christ – *Nativity, Passion, Crucifixion, Resurrection* and *Ascension* – from images in *The Pictorial Catechism* and commissioned for the Anglican church at Casterton.²¹ It proved to be a valuable advertisement for the firm, as similar series were ordered for Anglican churches at Dingley and St Kilda in Victoria and All Saints' Wickham Terrace and Kangaroo Point, Brisbane.

While diamond quarries and repetitive designs might have been the firm's 'bread and butter', artists Lyon and Drape were engaged on more prestigious designs, principally for larger city congregations. As early as 1864, evidence of the firm's standing was seen in the large four-light west window at Holy Trinity, Kew, a memorial to Queen Victoria's Consort, Prince Albert, who had died in 1861.²² *The Four Evangelists* filled the main lights and each was portrayed with his attribute under an architectural canopy. The eight-lobed oculus at the head of the tracery was appropriately filled with the image of



Ferguson and Urie, *William Shakspeare*, 1862. Now on permanent display in the sixth floor annulus of the La Trobe Reading Room, State Library of Victoria

the ascended *Christ in Glory* while each of the base panels contained a scene from the life of Christ on earth, an early appearance of images based on *The Pictorial Catechism*. It was thought to have been designed by John Lyon, but differences in style and colouring between Lyon's monumental figures and the small, rather more crudely drawn figures below, are readily identifiable, suggesting the work of more than one hand.²³

In 1877, Ferguson & Urie was at its peak when commissioned by Canon Septimus L. Chase for a second memorial window to Prince Albert for the (then) modest St Paul's Anglican Church in Swanston Street, Melbourne.²⁴ A three-light window, designed by David Drape, was a more appropriate subject for a Prince of the realm than *The Four Evangelists* at Kew; it pictured three Kings of the Old Testament in a not-so-subtle reference to Queen Victoria's unfulfilled wish that he rule at her side.²⁵ David Drape



Ferguson and Urie, *Memorial to Albert, Prince Consort*, 1874. Photographed by Ray Brown and reproduced with his kind permission

Detail (bottom left panel) from the above



William Montgomery, c.1927. Photograph by Pegg Clarke. William Montgomery Papers, State Library of Victoria

showed his mastery of drawing, colour and tone in the composition of the window and integration of the glowing heraldic symbols. This design, with its strong emphasis on blue, red and gold, was the epitome of High Victorian style, marking a climax of Ferguson and Urie's *oeuvre*. The firm would continue for many years but rarely strayed from the styles that had served them well, especially the High Victorian, which by 1864 had begun to lose favour in Britain where the new stained glass of Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris and others was steadily gaining in popularity.

Building expansion was by no means limited to the church. The increasingly prosperous middle class, determined to proclaim their status in the Melbourne society, built mansions on estates that befitted their new found wealth and their perceived station. Stained glass was enlisted as the perfect vehicle by which the owners could display their position, pursuits and aspirations. The inclusion of heraldic crests, both real and invented, added gravitas to a position in society, as previously noted in the restrained entrance at 'Longeronong' homestead or the equally elegant stairwell window of Richard

Grice's seaside home, 'Manyung', at Mornington in the early 1860s.²⁶ A more flamboyant interpretation of family lineage, as well as Victoria's prosperity, was embedded into the three-light window for 'Glenferrie House', built for James Fergusson, MLA, at Malvern in the late 1860s.²⁷ The window proclaimed Victoria's prosperity and progress but also Fergusson's Scottish heritage, represented by the thistle and bee atop the prominent Gordon crest, and his printing business, Fergusson and Mitchell, by a printing press depicted in a painted roundel below.²⁸

As wealth increased, so did the flamboyance of Ferguson & Urie's residential stained glass, notably at 'Mandeville Hall' in Toorak and 'Rupertswood' at Sunbury, owned by brothers Joseph Clarke and Sir William Clarke respectively, and built in the 1870s. These impressive windows proclaimed the status of the mansion's occupants in no uncertain terms, and one cannot but feel that there was some mild competitive spirit between the brothers in an effort to outdo each other with the grandeur of the installations. The *Four Seasons* window at 'Mandeville Hall' was intended as a reminder of 'home', showing idyllic English scenes with sporting pursuits symbolically represented in the margins. The date, 1877, was noted at the top of the window, as was the case at 'Manyung' (1863), and Joseph Clarke's monogram was in the base. At 'Rupertswood' there was a change of orientation and, rather than look to England, these windows embraced Australian country life and sporting pursuits painted in the realistic scenes set across the three windows in the vestibule, and signed by David Drape; local wildlife provided decorative flora and fauna elements to the margins.²⁹

From about this time in the mid-1870s, Ferguson & Urie began to fend off opposition from Brooks, Robinson & Co., a firm that was originally founded as an agency for Henry Brooks & Co., Export Merchants of London in 1854; the name changed when businessman Edward Gayner Robinson (c.1836 – c.1881) entered into partnership with Henry Brooks (d.1895) in 1868.³⁰ While oil, colour, paperhangings and other household goods were the staple imports, in 1855 the firm advertised 'Chance Bros. window glass' for sale from its premises in Stephen (now Exhibition) Street in the city.³¹ Although the advertisement included 'stained, ornamental and obscured' glasses, it was likely that the 'stained' glass referred to sheets of coloured glass rather than fully painted windows as no further mention of stained glass appears until 1878 when *The Good Samaritan*, a memorial to Edward Whitby, J. P., a prominent citizen and former councillor and mayor of the district, was installed in Christ Church, Brunswick.³² The competence of this work suggests that the firm's stained glass department was well established with a capable team of tradesmen.

'Marvellous Melbourne'

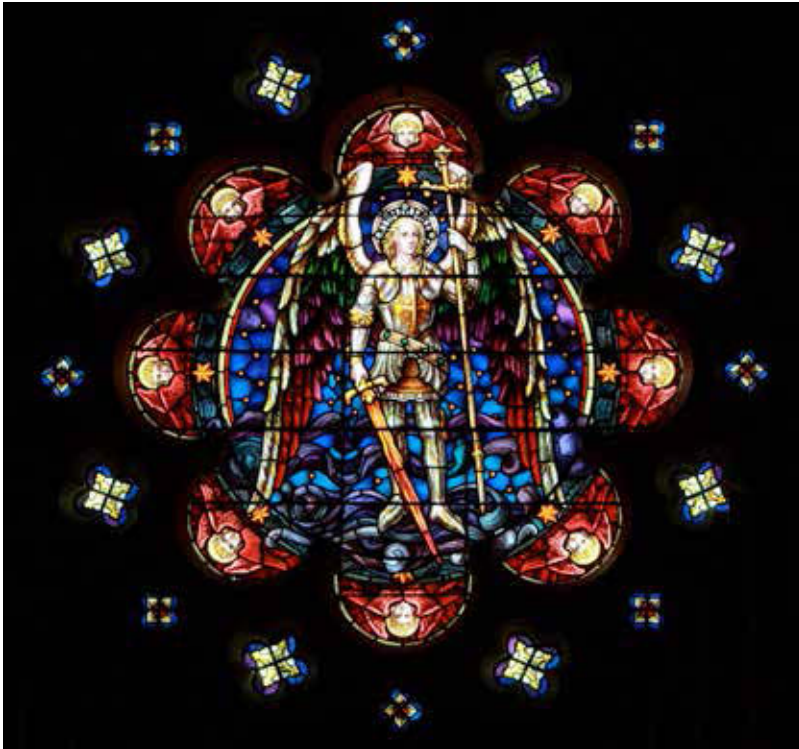
By the 1880s, Melbourne was in a frenzy of building activity on such an imposing scale that the celebrated London journalist George Augustus Sala dubbed the growing metropolis 'Marvellous Melbourne'.³³ With the exception of London, it was fast becoming the wealthiest and most 'Victorian' of cities of the Empire, its solid bluestone buildings



William Montgomery, 'Design for St Michael', 1921. William Montgomery Papers, State Library of Victoria

servicing as Australia's financial capital for the next fifty or more years.

In a climate of optimism best described as 'demolish exuberantly and start afresh', Melbourne presented great opportunities for architects and builders.³⁴ Less than ten years after its installation, little St Paul's Church and its Prince Consort window, were dismantled to make way for the grand William Butterfield-designed Anglican Cathedral of St Paul. The locally-made windows from the old church would not find a place within the



William Montgomery, *St Michael*, Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Kew, Victoria, 1921. Photographed by Vlad Bunevich and reproduced with his kind permission



William Montgomery, 'Design for the Great South Window, Wilson Hall, University of Melbourne', 1927. Photographer unknown. William Montgomery Papers, State Library of Victoria



M. Napier Waller, *The Great South Window, Wilson Hall, University of Melbourne*, gouache on photograph, 1928. Reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the Waller Estate and the Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne

comprehensive cycle of windows specified by the architect and imported from Clayton & Bell in London. While today the Consort window is considered to be one of Ferguson & Urie's finest works, in the 1880s it was considered out-moded and, when compared with the opportunity for an extensive cycle of imported windows, definitely inferior. Instead, it would find a new home in the modest country Anglican Church of St John at Sorrento, where it continues to reside today.³⁵

A measure of Brooks, Robinson's emerging reputation was the selection of the firm to install windows in St Paul's Anglican Cathedral, Melbourne, which were imported from Clayton & Bell in London.³⁶ Around the same time, London-trained designer John Hughes (n.d.) joined Brooks Robinson, possibly to oversee the installation of these windows.³⁷ The style and treatment of his subsequent Melbourne designs certainly suggests that he had worked at Clayton & Bell, notably in the delicate *Aquila and Priscilla*

at St John's Anglican Church, Heidelberg (1890), which bears distinct similarities to compositions and treatment of windows at St Paul's.³⁸ However, during Hughes' period as the firm's stained glass artist, Brooks, Robinson & Co. began to make their mark by capitalising on commercial and domestic opportunities. One of his early designs was a grand staircase window for Grosvenor Chambers at the Spring Street end of Collins Street in 1888, designed by Oakden, Addison and Kemp. Grosvenor Chambers is best known for its interiors by Messrs. Patterson Bros and for its studios occupied by painters Roberts, Waite, Abrahams and others. Not unexpectedly, the window depicted 'Painting', 'Sculpture' and 'Heraldic Work' in the Renaissance style.³⁹ This seems to have inspired another important commission, the magnificent stairwell window pair, *Art and Music*, for John Wagner's mansion, 'Stonington' (1891) in Malvern designed by Charles d'Ebro, that aimed to represent the accomplishments of the occupants and hospitality to guests in one grand statement.⁴⁰

'Welcome' was another popular theme for stained glass as was used at 'Cliveden', now the site of the Hilton Hotel, the town mansion of Sir William and Lady Janet Clarke built at the height of the 'Boom' in fashionable East Melbourne in 1887, and the setting of Melbourne's most glittering events for more than 20 years.⁴¹ The three-light window featured a well-dressed woman, arms outstretched in welcome, prominently positioned on the stairs to 'greet' guests as they rose to the first-floor salons. The theme of welcome was extended by the inclusion of a trumpeting herald offering a tray of refreshments in each of the flanking lights. In Carlton, 'Benvenuta', the ostentatious Italianate Baroque mansion designed by W. S. Law in the last triumph of excess, a staircase window reiterates the message of welcome to guests. Here the sumptuously gowned female figure, her arms outstretched, is accompanied by a small pageboy holding a cushion with the word 'Welcome' emblazoned on a ribbon. 'Cliveden's window was imported from James, Powell & Sons, Whitefriars, London in 1888, but the window at 'Benvenuta', now Medley Hall, was almost certainly designed by John Hughes, shortly before he left Brooks, Robinson & Co. after three years to join another Melbourne maker, Charles Rogers & Co.⁴²

Literary allusions were another popular theme among Melbourne's wealthy middle-class and a particularly fine window by immigrant stained glass artist William Montgomery (1850-1927) graced the stair landing at 'Redholme' in St Kilda Road, Melbourne. By the time 'Redholme' was designed by eclectic architect John Beswicke in 1896, Montgomery was regarded as Melbourne's leading stained glass artist, a position he retained until his death in 1927. Using a line from Sir Walter Scott's 'Lay of the Minstrel', Montgomery managed to imply the cultured disposition of his clients and to reference the welcome window at the same time. Restrained and sophisticated, there are suggestions of the Aesthetic Movement in the decorative use of daffodils and pomegranates alongside the oak leaf and acorn motif, which were seen in his window for Hawthorn Town Hall, made a few years earlier.⁴³

Montgomery had arrived in Melbourne in 1886, just in time to participate in the

building bonanza. He came with impressive credentials in the form of introductory letters, testimonials, and experience at Clayton & Bell before being 'head-hunted' by Franz Mayer of Munich, where he remained for seven years.⁴⁴ Montgomery's training was impressive. He had been apprenticed for seven years – from the age of 14 to his 21st birthday – to a Newcastle-upon-Tyne glass stainer, Henry Mark Barnett. Unusually for someone trained as an artisan, he had then attended the National Art School at South Kensington (now the Royal College of Art) after winning one of only three national scholarships offered in 1871. Within three months of his arrival in Melbourne in December 1886, he had set up a studio in Flinders Street and begun major commissions for St Michael's Catholic Church (now Cathedral) at Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, and for several Anglican churches in Victoria.

Despite the sudden influx of early commissions he did not seek to emulate the large studios such as Brooks, Robinson & Co., preferring instead to maintain artistic control over all his commissions with a select and skilled group of artisans around him. His artistic independence, excellent credentials and wide experience immediately brought him to the notice of architects such as John Beswicke who commissioned windows for his own home 'Rotha' and others in Harcourt Street, Hawthorn and 'Cullymont' and 'Eyrecourt' in Canterbury.⁴⁵ It was almost certainly through his connection with Beswicke that he was commissioned to design, make and install stained glass throughout the landmark 12-storey Australian Buildings on the corner of Elizabeth Street and Flinders Lane (now demolished), designed by Oakden, Addison and Kemp and Beswicke in association.⁴⁶

The Lay of the Minstrel window was to be one of the last of the great staircase windows of that extraordinary era.⁴⁷ The economic boom that followed the discovery of gold collapsed quite suddenly in the early 1890s, in the wake of land speculation, over-borrowing and empires built on paper money. By the time that 'Redholme' was built in 1896, Australia was well into a depression that would last for nearly ten years and would cause the collapse of the building trade, taking along with it more than half of Melbourne's glass stainers and leadlight firms, including Charles Rogers & Co. and Ferguson & Urie, which were forced to close its doors.

Ferguson & Urie's reputation had suffered after the unexpected death of David Drape in 1882 and it never quite recovered. Without strong artistic input, the deaths of its two principals, and a failure to move far from the High Victorian style of its early successes brought about its closure in 1899. Brooks, Robinson & Co. survived the 1890s depression, although the firm was forced to reduce staff and to recycle their most popular designs and cartoons.⁴⁸

Some firms sought to ward off the chill financial winds by moving their businesses to Western Australia or Tasmania, where mining was keeping those states' economies buoyant.⁴⁹ William Montgomery proved to be particularly entrepreneurial by opening a branch office and studio in Adelaide, South Australia, and diversifying his Melbourne business into rural Victoria and across Tasmania.⁵⁰ His connections to Christian all denominations, and his high reputation among leading architects, brought in sufficient

commissions to keep his Adelaide branch and Melbourne studios operating until well after 1901, when the disparate colonial States became the Commonwealth of Australia, and a new spirit of optimism at last pervaded the country.

This was not, however, reflected in a resurgence of stained glass. There were few mansions built and the new 'Federation' bungalow-style architecture no longer required great staircase windows. Instead, decorative leadlight – with little or no glass painting – became the bread and butter of all but a few *ateliers* that had retained the patronage of the church – Brooks, Robinson and Montgomery among them. The art of stained glass may have withered away and been lost altogether if it were not for the catastrophe of the First World War that brought in its wake a renewed interest in commemorative windows to honour and remember the men who fought for God, King and Country.

The Aftermath of the First World War

It was to be the widows and families of men killed on the battlefields of Turkey, France and Palestine in the First World War who would bring a resurgent demand for commemorative stained glass across the country. The first commissions for memorial windows were erected in parish churches and school chapels even before the Gallipoli campaign, often tributes to the sons of Britishers who had hastened to join their father's or grandfather's regiments in England, keen to add their service to the Empire before the expected swift victory was won without them.

Commemorative windows reflected Australia's close ties to the 'mother' country and saints such as St Alban, Britain's first martyr-saint, and the patron saint of England, St George represented the best qualities of the British soldier.⁵¹ In the early period of the war, grieving families erected personal memorials at a time when the abstract ideals of 'sacrifice', 'duty', and ultimate 'victory over death' could mask, or at least soften, the realities of loss. Services of dedication and the unveiling of windows simulated the rituals of graveside service, and the windows themselves became a form of headstone. The absence of a grave site ensured that the stained glass memorial window became a place for regular pilgrimage and private prayer.⁵² In the post-war 1920s the focus shifted from remembrance of individuals to parish and community monuments and a diminution of saintly heroes towards the human form of the soldier, which would feature more largely after Australia once again commemorated the fallen after 1945. The subjects of these windows also changed to reflect the growing secularisation of Australian society and a gradual change occurred from the symbolic saint to the human face of war, a change made easier with the passage of time.

Many windows were ordered from British firms, although Brooks, Robinson & Co. and, to an even greater extent William Montgomery, received orders for installations throughout Australia; Montgomery finalising more than eighty windows for Victorian churches alone from 1915 until 1927.⁵³ One example among so many stained glass memorials is Montgomery's commission for stained glass in the Chapel of All Saints at Geelong Grammar School, being built at Corio to designs by the architect Alexander



Alan Sumner, 'Presentation sketch, *St. Laurence*', c.1974. Alan Sumner Collection, State Library of Victoria. Reproduced courtesy of the Estate of Alan Sumner



Alan Sumner, *St. Laurence*, G. K. Tucker Settlement, Carrum Downs (Vic.) 1991.
Photograph by Bronwyn Hughes and reproduced with her kind permission

North; every one of the seven two-light windows was a memorial to former students killed during the First World War and installed from 1918 – 1924. The series of fourteen major saints of the Anglican church was selected by the Headmaster, the Rev. Francis Brown, to represent all the best attributes of the fallen, one of whom was a former prefect, footballer, rower and scholar for his school, George (Bob) Pollard Kay. Even while still in his final year at school, Kay was planning to sail to England and join the Royal Flying Corps; Captain Kay was killed only five months later flying over the fields of France.⁵⁴ Montgomery's memorial for Kay, *St. Michael* and *St. Gabriel*, was highly ornamental and flamboyant, making it tempting to speculate whether the artist's war memorial windows were in some way also in honour of his own son who was killed in one of the last futile

battles of the war, less than one month before the Armistice was signed. The Kay family was sufficiently impressed to order a second version of *St. Michael* for their local parish church at Kew in Melbourne, a rose window in the south transept that was unveiled by Dr. Brown in 1921.

At Melbourne Teacher's College in what is now known as the 1888 Building, a three-light window with the robust figure of the Australian digger at its centre epitomised this iconographical evolution. The soldier was flanked by a long list naming all the College men (and two women) who had volunteered and also those who made the 'Supreme Sacrifice'. The imposing figure of the tanned soldier was placed with the Australian flag billowing out behind him, although at first glance it appeared to be the Union Jack and a reference to Britain. The Australian Military Forces badge, the rising sun, shone above his head, and appeared to raise the figure's status from soldier to secular saint.⁵⁵ Initially the window's designer, another English artist at Brooks, Robinson & Co., William Wheildon, felt that the central figure should follow the conventional representation, possibly in the form of a medieval knight or a Roman soldier, but he was finally convinced that there was no reason why the Australian soldier could not equally express the ideal of courage.⁵⁶ The cartoon for the figure was drawn by George H. Dancey, who captured, according to one report, 'a wonderful combination of tenderness and strength, of repugnance for war and heroism in it'.⁵⁷ Unfettered by the constraints of a church setting, the image was conceived as the heroic Anzac, representing the debacle of Gallipoli as a great event in Australia's Nationhood.

Inevitably, the figure of the Australian digger was accepted for religious settings and can be seen in Anglican church windows at Heyfield and Lancefield by Brooks, Robinson & Co. and at St George's Presbyterian, Geelong and St George's Anglican at Malvern by Montgomery. This solemn, human reality of war would find even greater expression after the Second World War, when the soldier, joined by the airman and occasional seaman or nurse, regularly found expression in stained glass alongside the saints of the church.⁵⁸ The culmination of secularised memorials was possibly the Hall of Memory in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, designed and made by Mervyn Napier Waller (1893-1972) to honour the men and women of both world wars.

By the mid-1920s, Montgomery, now in his 70s and suffering illness, sought assistance to complete his commissions. It is thought that he probably knew Napier and Christian Waller through his son Mont, when all three attended the National Gallery Art School. Montgomery, however, as a trustee of the National Gallery, was aware too of Napier Waller's ability as a designer of murals.⁵⁹ He admired Waller's war sketches and followed this soldier's post-war artistic progress and recognised a potential for stained glass design in Waller's monumental mural schemes. Waller accepted Montgomery's commission to expand some small colour sketches into full scale cartoons, the first of which was for the east window for a new Louis Williams-designed Church of St Mark being built at Nyngan NSW in 1926.⁶⁰ Both Napier and his wife Christian Waller (1894-1954) showed a keen interest in stained glass and Christian was asked for cartoons for

Bridgewater and Jericho in Tasmania and for a small window at Nyngan, NSW.⁶¹ The collaboration between Montgomery and the Wallers marked a change in the younger designers' artistic direction and Montgomery's introduction to Louis Williams would be instrumental in bringing to Napier and Christian Waller significant stained glass commissions and recognition in the Inter-War period.

When Montgomery died in July 1927 the number of post-war commemorative stained glass memorials was diminishing, but his business was relatively buoyant. Of many unfulfilled orders, he left two significant commissions at different stages of completion: the Warriors' Chapel at All Saints' Anglican Cathedral, Bathurst and *The Apotheosis of Learning* for Wilson Hall at the University of Melbourne.⁶² Mrs. Montgomery recommended Napier Waller to Edward Stevens, donor of the Wilson Hall window, thus providing Napier with the first opportunity for a major commission, albeit to Montgomery's general design. Waller completed one two-light section, which was dedicated to Chemistry through the achievements of Robert Boyle, the only section unresolved by Montgomery at the time of his death. Napier Waller also fine-tuned Montgomery's sketch designs and produced cartoons for the window in collaboration with William Wheildon at Brooks, Robinson & Co., the makers of the window.⁶³

In contrast to those employed in the big firms of the previous century or even William Montgomery's small and manageable staff, Napier and Christian Waller worked alone in the studio, taking the process from initial idea through to completed window, a time-consuming process but one that allowed them to have complete artistic control. Their only external assistance is believed to have been provided by Samuel Williams, an employee of Brooks, Robinson & Co. who went to their studio to cut glass to their exacting requirements.⁶⁴

Napier Waller completed his first church commission for the newly completed Louis Williams Anglican church at East Geelong in 1929, shortly before the couple's much-vaunted trip to England to the stained glass studios of Arts & Crafts artists Whall & Whall in London.⁶⁵ If his pre-Whall work was somewhat cluttered by multiple figures and extraneous details, Waller soon pared back his compositions to the strong heroic forms evident by 1935 in windows such as the Pioneers window at Wesley Church, Lonsdale Street, Melbourne and the Leckie window for Wilson Hall, now restored and installed in the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne.⁶⁶ He became equally adept at a narrative style with small scenes with groups of figures that required concentrated attention from the viewer. The *New Guinea Martyrs* window (1946) and *Second World War Memorial* (1949) at St Peter's Eastern Hill and *The Lord is My Shepherd* (n.d.) at St John's, Flinders exemplify this particular compositional style.

Although Christian Waller designed her first window as early as June 1927 while still working with Montgomery, her most significant works were designed in the 1930s after the visit to Britain.⁶⁷ She not only avoided the clichés of the past, but drew on her spiritual awareness and skills as a colourist to achieve well-resolved compositions that often included unusual texts, integral to the design. Among her exceptional ecclesiastical

works was the atypical representation of St Francis, *Song of St. Francis*, at Queen's College Chapel at the University of Melbourne.⁶⁸ The saint was shown surrounded by a selection of birds and animals as traditionally depicted, but with his mouth open as if in full voice. Equally unexpected was *Peter's Sermon on the Morning of Pentecost* (1936), installed in the Littlejohn Memorial Chapel at Scotch College, where the Holy Spirit was not expressed as tiny tongues of fire on the tops of heads as commonly seen, but as a stream coming from Peter's right hand.⁶⁹

Some of her most successful designs are, like *Peter's Sermon*, densely structured and relatively small in size; *St. Giles* (1934) for the (now) Uniting Church, Murrumbena; the trilogy, *Richard de Wiche, Richard, Bishop of Chichester* and *Saint Richard* (1934), for St Paul's Frankston or the baptistery windows at Geelong Grammar School Chapel exemplify her mastery of the medium on a small scale. Possibly the most successful of all her windows was *East of the Sun, West of the Moon*, at 'Beleura' in Mornington, former home of composer John Tallis.⁷⁰ Christian met and became a close friend of the young Tallis when she and Napier were heading to England in 1929. *East of the Sun, West of the Moon* was another of Christian's favoured enigmatic texts, taken from a fairy tale, a Norse version of the Greek legend of Cupid and Psyche.⁷¹ It remains the only known work by Christian for a domestic setting and one of the most significant Australian stained glass works of the twentieth century. Both Napier and Christian Waller produced stained glass of exceptional quality and, in defiance of the 1930s Depression, surpassed their predecessors and outstripped other practitioners of the Inter-War period.

Post-1945: Australian Modernism

Unlike the First World War, when stained glass firms continued to operate, albeit short of supplies and labour, the Second World War brought restrictions. In 1940 stained glass was considered non-essential to the war effort and thus prohibited during the war years. However, after hostilities ceased, there was once again a resurgence of interest in commemoration, with stained glass among the monuments to the new generation to lose their lives for God, King and country.

Napier and Christian Waller and other Australian artists and firms were soon joined by a number of immigrants and refugee artists who had trained in the Modernist schools and ateliers of their home lands. Coming from war torn and battered European countries as well as from Britain, some artists were placed in the studios of Brooks, Robinson & Co., only to find that the work revolved around nineteenth-century traditional themes and subjects and a moribund production style, and that their skills and strengths were barely recognised in the conservatism of the period. Those who risked setting up on their own found few responsive clients, and often many lean years, before they gained any level of acceptance. Despite this some émigré artists, including John Orval (Netherlands), Mila Zika (Czechoslovakia), Derek Pearse (England), Klaus Zimmer (Germany) and Bela Kosak (Hungary), made significant contributions to the art of stained glass that are only now in the current century attaining any level of recognition.⁷²



Alan Sumner, 'Rough sketch for *St. Francis of Assisi*', c. 1974. Alan Sumner Collection, State Library of Victoria. Reproduced courtesy of the Estate of Alan Sumner



Alan Sumner, *St. Francis of Assisi*, presentation sketch, Presbyterian Church, Clifton Hill, c. 1974. Alan Sumner Collection, State Library of Victoria. Reproduced courtesy of the Estate of Alan Sumner

Local Australian artists such as Leonard French (b. 1928) and John Ferguson (1923–2010) were inspired by European Modernism to explore new directions, techniques and technologies and to reinterpret old iconographies, as was Alan Robert Melbourne Sumner (1911–1994). As a fifteen year old, Alan Sumner was employed in the stained glass studio of E. L. Yencken & Co. as assistant to the head of department, William 'Jock' Frater. Over the next 15 years he worked alongside Frater learning all aspects of the art and craft of stained glass.

Frater had a reputation as a crusty and difficult boss, but he was very supportive of his young 'improver' and, after seeing Sumner's self-portrait in oils, painted at his night class at Collingwood Tech, Frater paved the way for Sumner to be accepted into the art classes of 'Classical Modernist' George Bell. Sumner flourished under Bell's tutelage and remained a devoted Modernist all his life. However, neither he nor Frater found opportunities to introduce more contemporary styles into stained glass; traditional forms, symbols and subjects that had evolved in the Gothic revival of the nineteenth

century remained the province of the commercial firms and the choice of a conservative clientele. A window for the porch at Wesley Central Mission, Lonsdale Street, was typical of windows from the firm. *St. Luke*, an appropriate subject for a memorial to a doctor, was designed by Frater, and painted by Sumner, possibly with the exception of the facial features that may have been completed by Frater.⁷³ It is unusual due to the two sets of initials painted into the background by Sumner, 'WF' and 'AS'.⁷⁴

In accordance with government war directives, the Yencken firm closed down the stained glass department in 1940 and Frater retired, while Sumner joined the Air Force in 1943, and Leading Aircraftman Sumner's artistic talent was enlisted by a camouflage unit based at Albury.⁷⁵ In 1945, peace brought the need for another wave of commemorative windows, although in smaller numbers than after 1918. Sumner became a sub-contractor to his old firm, fulfilling orders in much the same Yencken style as those of the pre-war period, including many for Methodist churches at Frankston, Shepparton and Dandenong. One window for St Andrew's Kirk in Ballarat promised something more than other windows, with an arrangement of roundels and squares against a vegetal background that showed Sumner to be re-examining medieval styles.

Alan Sumner only fully discovered the potential of Modernism for stained glass during a visit to Europe in the early 1950s.⁷⁶ His visits to major Gothic cathedrals, Chartres, Beauvais and Le Mans among them, were balanced by his absorption of the French Impressionists, the Post-Impressionists and, most significantly, the works of El Greco that would bring a new impetus to his stained glass. His return to Australia coincided with the burgeoning suburbs of Australia's major cities and the emergence of the cream brick parish church, loosely based on the English architect Sir Basil Spence's Coventry Cathedral of St Michael. It proved to be an acceptable, if initially somewhat controversial, ecclesiastical model that had finally, after 150 years, replaced the Gothic Revival form.

Sumner was sought by architects engaged in designing these new suburban churches, including Alan Robertson, Stan Moran and Edward Billson. Sumner evolved designs for St Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Frankston that responded to Robertson's 1954 Modernist design. *Redemption*, based on a simple cross and the symbols of Christ's Passion, filled the west wall and a similarly large window in the shallow transept depicted the patron saint of the church, *St. Francis Xavier*, with a stylised map of his travels.⁷⁷ Sumner's windows accommodated tight post-war budgets by filling large expanses of glass walls with a majority of commercial glasses, by only using expensive 'Antique' glass for focal point and important subjects and by his judicious use of glass paint and silver stain. Robertson was clearly pleased with the results as Sumner was re-engaged for similarly large windows and a series of small door panels for another new church at Mordialloc in 1956. As well as the patron saint, *St. Bridget* and *Our Lady, Patroness of Australia*, Sumner was asked to design a memorial to the men of the 58/59 battalion of the Australian Army who had died in the battles against the Japanese in New Guinea. It is one of few war memorial windows to be found in Victoria's Catholic churches but it

was especially welcomed here by the parish priest, Fr James English, who was Chaplain to the battalion throughout its intense fighting in New Guinea and Borneo.⁷⁸ Stained glass was a major element of St Oliver Plunkett Catholic Church, Pascoe Vale, another Alan Robertson church design, completed in 1961 and filled with Sumner's glass over the next four years. Scenes from the *Life of Christ, Resurrection and Ascension* (1961) float within the huge expanse of the west wall and allow for a light-filled interior to the building.⁷⁹

Similarly, at St Luke's Anglican Church, Frankston East, which was architect Edward Billson's last major work, Sumner was commissioned for a complete suite of windows that were dedicated in 1967.⁸⁰ Billson's upside-down, U-shaped windows presented Sumner with a particular design challenge that he met by carefully placing symbols in the narrow space while maintaining a flow and rhythmic quality to the whole cycle.⁸¹ The west window, dedicated to the church's patron saint, St Luke, was a memorial to former parishioner and Victorian governor, Sir Dallas Brooks (1896–1966). The grand design celebrates the life of St Luke as church builder, physician and gospel writer alongside the risen Christ and Sir Dallas is represented by his various insignia and awards, masterfully painted by Sumner, in the lower central section of the window.

However, few churches could afford to install an entire cycle of windows in their newly completed buildings. Sumner, with the encouragement of his architect and clergy commissioners, often prepared scale drawings for entire cycles of windows, knowing that only a small proportion would be commissioned immediately. In some instances, the process continued for thirty years, and some works remained unfinished at the time of his death in 1994, only to be completed by others.⁸²

Conclusion

Stained glass began in the young colony of Victoria when prosperity beckoned through mineral wealth, pastoral pursuits and commercial enterprise in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As seen from those decades, the installation of stained glass generally came with periods of community and private wealth, as in the 1880s 'Boom' period, or when the cause outweighed financial considerations, as was the case in the aftermath of the First World War and the imperative to commemorate many who fought and died for God, King and country.

The way that stained glass was commissioned changed over time too. The first windows were paid for by individual landowners, businessmen and occasionally clergy, not only for the church but also for private homes and institutions. The abrupt dip in fortunes in the wake of depression and changes wrought by war also brought a shift towards shared parish and community commissions for windows in public places, fewer individual patrons and an almost total absence of stained and painted glass in residential settings.

Changes in architectural styles for houses and churches played a part. The

extravagance of the later nineteenth century was replaced with generally more modest dwellings and those who could afford to ornament their homes did so without the need for grand statements in glass. By the time of post-Second World War austerity, Australian society, which had already become more secular in its outlook in the inter-war period, was also becoming increasingly more multi-cultural and less reliant on the traditions of the past. Architecture of the period, whether domestic, commercial or ecclesiastical, relied little on ornamentation and much more on wide expanses of clear float glass.⁸³ Once again, the church became the principal place for stained glass, although with fewer installations than previously. Despite an increasing population, churchgoing has been in decline since the 1970s and in the last census showed the trend away from religion to be accelerating.⁸⁴ Historic stained glass is placed at risk as churches close, or are re-invented as private homes and businesses such as Heavenly Pancakes and Angels Restaurant, or are simply sold off and demolished. Maybe stained glass should be included on the endangered species list; one of those historical important creatures that has never been fully examined or inventoried before it disappeared. The future for contemporary work appears even more uncertain.

Australia's next phase of architectural glass is unlikely to be commissioned by the church and if glass is to have any place in the architecture of the future it will probably be in the architecture of public and commercial spheres. High-rise steel and glass boxes use walls of plain float glass today, but this should not lead to bland, unimaginative and boring buildings. Perhaps glass, no longer stained and leaded, may need to be reinvented by a small number of designers with innovative and creative ideas, who are able to respond to the architectural challenges of the future, as Napier and Christian Waller responded in the last century. Some of the most successful glass was the outcome of a close collaboration between architect and artist, as was the case in the 1960s when Roy Grounds commissioned Leonard French for the vibrant ceiling of the Great Hall at the National Gallery of Victoria.⁸⁵ In a more recent example, Andrew Bartholomeuz from Saaj Design commissioned artist Christopher John to integrate glass façades, screens and floor panels throughout a new home at Fairlie Court, South Yarra (2010).⁸⁶ Instead of using the bold colour of the National Gallery ceiling, light is modified and diffused through float glass to create a soft and minimal interior space-glass design for the early decades of the twenty-first century.

Throughout its long history, glass has been adaptable to changing times and cultures and our Australian experience indicates that while glass is in the hands of artists and stays closely allied to its architecture it will continue to have relevance and purpose for contemporary society.

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