

## THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS OF PILTON CHURCH

by Reginald Norman

The Church of St Mary the Virgin at Pilton possesses eight large stained glass windows, all of which are modern in design and much admired for the beautiful tracery and richness of colour: azure and crimson, green and orange.

Four of the windows perpetuate the memory of the Hall family, viz. the late Rev. William Cradock Hall, M.A. and Mrs. Hall and Mr. & Mrs. Townshend Hall. One of these windows is in the Chancel and the other three in the Raleigh Chapel.



THE CHANCEL WINDOW (left) is to the memory of the Rev. W.C. Hall, who was connected with the parish for fifty years. He came to Pilton in 1837 on the death of Mr Spurway (who served the Church for 72 years), and at once built the parsonage at his own expense. The window was placed in the Church by Mr. T. M. Hall, the only son of the deceased and at the time Patron of the living. This is the oldest memorial stained glass window in the Church and worthy of the visitor's attention. It stands immediately over the fine reredos<sup>1</sup> which it was designed to match. The tablet is of Corsham Down and Portland stone and contains the inscription "In loving memory of the Rev. William Cradock Hall, M.A., Perpetual Curate and Vicar of this Parish 1837-1842 and 1850-1889." Beside this inscription appears the Hall crest and motto. "Fide et Amore" and "Born 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1802, died 24<sup>th</sup> March 1889." On the reredos Mr Hall placed a cresting in the perpendicular style of Corsham Stone, which was extended to include the memorial tablet. This work was executed by Messrs. Bryant & Son of

Barnstaple, who also restored the stone work of the window.

The two centre lights form the most prominent features of the window. The first represents the Resurrection – a rock-hewn sepulchre with Our Lord emerging from it, just as the angels had rolled away the stone. Beneath is written "I am the Resurrection and the Life." The next light depicts Our Lord's Ascension with beneath it His promise "I go to prepare a place for you."

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<sup>1</sup> The 'reredos' is the decorative screen behind the main altar.

In the minor side lights are placed on record something connected with the early history of the Church. On the right side is King Athelstan bearing his sceptre and orb and beneath is placed his shield of blue and red with a golden cross. On the left is the Virgin Mary to whom the Church is dedicated, supporting on her right hand the infant Saviour, while beneath are the arms of the Priory. These have been reproduced from the copy of the original seal of the Priory. It is interesting to add that a carved stone canopy precisely similar to that on the seal was dug up near the Church tower.

THE WINDOW IN THE SOUTH WALL of the Raleigh Chapel perpetuates the memory of Louisa Mary Townshend Hall, who died 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1889. It depicts three figures and an inscription which runs "And now abideth Faith, Hope and Charity, but the greatest of these is Charity." Beneath the figures there is also a touching portrayal of a child in a cot, watched by three angels in mid-air. Mr. Hall obtained this idea – a very happy one – as a result of one of his visits to the Children's Ward of the North Devon Infirmary.

IN THE EAST WINDOW are four angelic angels and these represent brotherly love. This window is dedicated to Elizabeth, widow of the Rev. William Cradock Hall and mother of Mr. Townshend Hall, who died 16<sup>th</sup> January, 1897.



Those who appreciate the work of an honest historian who has endeavoured to keep the past from altogether eluding our grasp will give more than a passing glance to the MEMORIAL WINDOW OF MR. TOWNSHEND HALL, the colour and various details being masterpieces of workmanship. It illustrates the return of the healed leper to Christ, with, in the side light, figures of St. Luke, "the beloved physician" and St. Margaret, the patron saint of the ancient Lepers' Hospital at Pilton. Beneath the last figure an angel holds a replica of the ancient seal of the Hospital (left), the only impression of which is now in the North Devon Athenaeum (the seal itself was lost early in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century). It consists of an inscription "Segill Leprosor Beate Margarete de Pylton". There are also angels with scrolls on which are inscribed an appropriate memorial which reads "To the Glory of God and to the Memory of Townshend

Monckton Hall born March, 1845, died 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1899."

The four windows were designed and executed by Messrs. F. Drake & Sons of Exeter.

In place of two lattice windows which were formerly in the SOUTH AISLE, are TWO STAINED GLASS WINDOWS. One was donated by the son and daughter of James Hartnoll of London, who died 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 1900 aged 46. He was the son of Thomas Hartnoll of this parish, and his memorial window represents the parable of the Good Samaritan (right). (N.B. A Thomas Hartnoll was Parish Clerk for 37 years. He died in 1857 aged 83 years.)



The other window is to the memory of William Gould of Pilton Abbey, the subject being Melchisedech blessing Abraham, Joshua and the Captain of the Lord's Host. Mr. Gould came of a family of merchants long settled in Barnstaple and was the son of John Gould who built the Brunswick Wharf and brother of R.D. Gould, the Barnstaple Borough Surveyor, who designed the Barnstaple market and many residential buildings and streets, and whose son was Sir Francis Carruthers Gould the renowned caricaturist. Mr Gould, leading an eminently useful life, was extremely popular, having for a great many years devoted a lot of time to charitable movements. He was a trustee of the Bluecoat School, one of the Pilton Feoffees and a great benefactor to the Church and Parish at Pilton. He was churchwarden from 1893-5. Mr. Gould married in 1860 Miss Shepard of Sidmouth and died 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1902 aged 77 years. The window was donated by his widow and children and executed by Messrs. Heaton, Butler & Bayne of London.

THE WINDOW AT THE WEST END OF THE SOUTH AISLE is in memory of William Fisher of Pottington, who died 13<sup>th</sup> April 1921. The four main lights show in rather pleasing green and yellow, the Resurrection of our Lord as he appears to the holy women. Mary Magdalene, with her long hair rippling over her shoulders, kneels before Him and behind her Jerusalem is seen in the middle background. Behind Our Lord are two angels. In the tracery opening appear the Greek letters Alpha and Omega (Christ is first and last). There are also youthful ministers bearing the implements of the Passion. The window was dedicated by the widow of Mr. Fisher. Mr. Fisher was a devout Christian and took an active part in Church affairs. He was identified with many important undertakings which had occurred in connection with the Church such as enlargement of the School, the provision of the new organ, the building of the Church Rooms, the Restoration of the Chancel and other work. He was for many years churchwarden and, being personally popular, served on many local committees.

THE WINDOW IN THE WEST END OF THE NAVE is excellent and was furnished in memory of those who fell in the Great War. The crucifixion is depicted in the middle panels, with the Virgin at the foot of the Cross and St. John on the right hand. Above St. John is an angel confronting Our Lord upon the Cross. Of the two outside panels, the one on the right

represents St. Alban, the first British martyr and a Roman soldier, and on the left St. Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors. At the bottom of the window are figures in modern dress of a nurse, a sailor, a member of the Flying Corps and a soldier (below). Beneath is a brass tablet on which is inscribed "This window is placed here to the Glory of God and in Memory of the men from this Parish (39 names in all) who lost their lives in the Great War 1914-1918".



Most interesting, of course, if we have an interest in antiquities, are the THREE-HEADED TUDOR WINDOWS ALONG THE NORTH WALL. These were originally in the cloister until the suppression of the monasteries, and contain the remains of the only mediaeval stained glass left in the Church. In Tudor times colour was as significant as design. Just as to this day we say "blue is true" and green is considered to denote "forsaken", there was a meaning expressed by the colours used in these old windows. Divine love and wisdom, faith and spirituality were indicated by tints.

"And storied windows richly dight<sup>2</sup>,  
Casting a dim religious light."

On entering the Church few things produce a deeper impression on the mind of the visitor than the stained glass windows. They are among its most interesting features and form an additional ornament to the Church, which, in his years of good service, Mr. Townshend Hall has done much to beautify, so as to give the Church the colourful appearance which it presented in olden times.

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*Reginald Charles Norman (1908-1984) was the second eldest of the six sons of William and Susanna Norman of 12 Carrington Terrace, Barnstaple. He was married to Daisy Guillaume at St Peter's Church in 1946 and lived at 9 Ladywell, Pilton. In addition to this note on the stained glass windows he also wrote 'Bells – Secular and Sacred' about the history of church bells, particularly those of St Mary's Church.*

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<sup>2</sup> 'Dight' is a word derived from Middle English 'dighthen' meaning to adorn.