

NOTES ON THE REMAINS OF ANCIENT PAINTED GLASS IN STOKE CHARITY CHURCH.

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THE little parish church of St. Michael, Stoke Charity, is well known to archæologists by reason of its tombs, brasses, and other memorials of the past. These have been fully dealt with in past numbers of the "Hampshire Field Club Proceedings"¹ as well as in "Victoria County History for Hampshire,"² and require no further comment.

It is, however, worthy of remark that, with the exception of a single and, unfortunately, inaccurate note in "Victoria County History for Hampshire" (Vol. III, p. 448), no attention whatever has hitherto been paid to the very important and interesting portions of ancient glass still existing in several windows of the church. With the exception of the two shields in the west window, the whole of the glass appears to have been inserted by the Hampton family between 1454 and 1483. The Hamptons were Lords of the Manor of Old Stoke Charity, which had been in their possession since 1334. They were people of some importance, no less than four of the male representatives of the family having held the post of Knight of the Shire in succession one to another.

Thus :—(1) John de Hampton, from 1336 to 1344; died before October, 1357.³ (2) Thomas de Hampton, from 1361 to 1365; died before 1384.⁴ (3) John de Hampton, in 1394; and (4) John Hampton, his son, in 1432.

¹ Ref. Vol. III, pp. 1-26, "Old Stoke Charity."

² Vol. III, p. 447 *et seq.*

³ The family of Brocas of Beaurepaire, 307, 342, 346.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 307, 342.

Thomas Hampton, the last of his line, had presumably no wish for parliamentary honours. The members with whom we are particularly concerned in connection with the church's ancient glass are John and Thomas. John Hampton, as we have noted, had been Knight of the Shire in 1432, being subsequently appointed Esquire of the King's Body in 1454. The date is of importance as being the year wherein King Henry VI became so insane as to be incapable either of reigning or of managing his own affairs. Richard, Duke of York, the father of the future Edward IV, was therefore appointed as Regent, and it was from him that John Hampton received his appointment. It is possible that this had something to do with the Hamptons' subsequent strong adherence to the Yorkist party.

Thomas Hampton, the last male of the family, appears to have succeeded his father at some period between 1454 and 1461. He carried out somewhat extensive alterations in the church, inserting a new chancel window, rebuilding the Norman north chancel aisle as a family chantry chapel, and filling most of the church windows with coloured glass. The work was completed and the glass in place when he died in 1483.

We may now commence an examination of the various remains, beginning with the east window, which appears to contain the earliest glazing in the church. This glass was restored in 1907 by Mr. Westlake, the greater part being entirely new. He appears to have copied the original portions very closely, making it most difficult to distinguish new from old. The original design was unusual. The three upper main lights contained figures beneath architectural canopies of most singular design, being tall battlemented octagonal towers with large port-like openings drawn in "matt" and outlined in "stain," strongly suggestive of some of the canopies in the great west window of Winchester Cathedral (c. 1380), and possibly copied from them. It is difficult to imagine anything much more unlike the characteristic open-work canopy of the period, and the general character of the design

and drawing suggests that the glass was the work of some provincial artist (perhaps a resident in Winchester), without much imagination. Each light is surrounded by a border of the letters "T. H." interspaced with slips of red and blue glass. Some portions of the central figures of the Virgin and Child are original, including the beautiful golden crowned head of the Virgin, together with bits of her drapery, most of the surmounting canopy, and the surrounding border. It should be remarked here that the "Victoria County History for Hampshire" mentions this glass, but errs in assigning it to the east window of the Hampton chapel. The rest is practically all new work. The border in cusps of top left light is ancient, as are one or two other bits here and there.

The three lower lights, those below the transom, merely contain quarry fields, each quarry bearing a separate pattern drawn thereon in stain. This simple arrangement may have been due to the fact that, in olden days, the window was partly hidden by the reredos. Similar instances of the lower part of an east window being treated in this manner may be found at Gloucester Cathedral, and formerly at Great Malvern Priory in Worcestershire. The Gloucester glass (c. 1348) still remains *in situ*, the Malvern window (c. 1465) being now, however, filled up with an extraordinary collection of ancient glass taken from every window in the church.¹

In each case the reason was the same: a lady chapel projecting eastwards of the window rendered more ornate glazing unnecessary.

It is possible to ascertain the approximate date of this glass. The letters "T. H." in borders clearly identify Thomas Hampton, the last male of the family, as the donor. He died in 1483. On the other hand, the complete absence of the Yorkist badge of the radiant sun, as compared with the abundant display of the same device in the windows of the Hampton chapel, suggests that this glass was in place before February, 1461, when that badge was first adopted. As John Hampton was still alive in 1454, we may therefore infer that the window

¹ Releaded in 1916.

was glazed between his death (date unknown, but after 1454) and 1461.

Next in date are the important fragments in the windows of the Hampton Chantry, being some of the finest glass yet remaining in Hampshire. It may be considered to date c. 1470-72. Enough remains to show that these windows, when complete, were of the "figure upon quarry backgrounds" type, so common both in English ecclesiastical and in domestic glazing during the second half of the fifteenth century. Each light contained a single figure or group of figures standing upon tessellated brackets, inscribed with the names, and placed upon backgrounds of quarries, each separate piece of glass enriched with some device, usually of a foliate character, drawn thereon in stain, the whole being surrounded with a border, in this case the most unusual design of radiant suns.

Very similar examples, although of different workmanship, may be seen in the westernmost pair of nave clerestory windows at St. Cross (c. 1450) and in a north transept window (c. 1480) of the same church, whilst there is hardly a county throughout England that cannot be quoted as not possessing such windows. The radiant sun *borders*, however, appear to be unique, the usual devices being fleur-de-lis enclosed within foliage (as in a window of St. Peter Cheshill, Winchester) crowns, sometimes surmounting letters, and oblongs of strap work enclosing foliage.

The only glass in the eastern window of the Hampton Chantry consists of Yorkist suns in the cusps, and of a piece of the head of a Christ, with cruciferous nimbus, the right-hand side of the face, with the hair and one eye, being still visible. This, together with the larger fragment of the Almighty Father's head in the northern window of the chapel, may have formed part of a Trinity group, possibly forming part of the glazing of east window of Chantry, and treated in like manner to those on the Hampton brass, and to that in the east window of Winchester College chapel—namely, the Almighty Father seated holding His crucified Son in front of Him.

NORTH WINDOW.

This contains the finest glass in the church, and may be described as follows :—

Left to Right—Light 1.—The head of a nimbed female saint, with golden hair, wearing low, golden crown of rich design, and once holding a staff terminating in golden cross, two of its tips being still visible. This figure, when perfect, probably represented the popular St. Margaret of Antioch thrusting her cross staff into a dragon at her feet, as in a window of Fromond's Chantry, Winchester College. St. Margaret was tortured by order of Olybrius, Prefect of Pisidia, and finally beheaded in the year 306. It is related that, whilst in prison, the Evil One appeared to her in the guise of a hideous dragon, breathing out fire. He attacked and swallowed her, but she, making the sign of the Cross, caused him to burst asunder, so that she emerged unhurt. From this incident St. Margaret is usually regarded as the patron saint of women in child-birth.

Also note, in this light, a circle containing a design of four interlaced stems of clover leaf, possibly intended as an emblem of the Trinity, and taken from the light wherein that group was placed.

Light 2.—The Blessed Virgin and Child. The Virgin probably stood wearing a very rich golden crown, its rim ornamented with foliate crosses. Her halo is white, with stained trefoil border, and she has golden hair. Her robes are white, the golden borders ornamented with ovals and diamonds in white. She holds a golden sceptre, and supports the Infant Saviour in her arms. He is nimbed, has golden curly hair, and places one hand against His Mother's face.

This light also contains the portion of a shield apparently charged "Argent a cross, voided between four cinquefoils or, in chief two cinquefoils of the last."

Light 3.—A seated figure of Christ, nimbed, and with curly yellow hair, wearing white tunic powdered with yellow rosettes, holding orb with tall cross rising therefrom, and giving benediction. The size of this figure as compared with

those in the other lights makes it apparent that it was intended to represent Christ as a child, whilst its attitude leaves little doubt for thinking that it originally formed part of a St. Christopher panel. The subject of the giant St. Christopher carrying Christ across a river was a favourite one with medieval artists. In a panel such as this the saint would be shown as holding a great staff, standing in a pool of water, perhaps containing a golden fish, and looking up at the Child upon his shoulder. The legend is too well known to require repetition.

NORTHERN WINDOW.

Light 3.—It is illustrated in full in a wall painting in Shorwell Church, I.W. (ref. "Hampshire Field Club Proceedings," Vol. II, p. 221).

The saint was regarded as a protection against sudden death, and it was for this reason that the representations of St. Christopher are nearly always placed on the wall, or in a window, just opposite the church door, so that the eye of the incoming worshipper might at once alight upon it. He was also the patron saint of crossbowmen. This third light also contains a few other pieces:—

(1) A fragment of white drapery, perhaps belonging to St. Christopher.

(2) Part of a sun-border with a small yellow-sleeved arm holding a staff. It is possible that this fragment formed part of the figure of a hermit, a detail so often found in wall-paintings of this subject, though rarely in glass.

(3) The lower half of a bearded head with a dove's head and wings near the mouth. This undoubtedly formed part of a Trinity, and may have come from the east window of the chapel.

As has already been remarked upon, the borders of both the windows in this chapel are composed of oblong pieces of white glass bearing thereon radiant suns, drawn in stain, and interspaced with slips of red and blue. Yorkist suns in the cusps or spandrels of a window are very common (an example may be seen in a window of St. Peter Cheshill Church in

Winchester), but their use as a border appears to be absolutely unique. It is evident that Thomas Hampton, the donor of the glass, was an ardent supporter of the Yorkist cause. The general character of the work suggests 1470-71 as a probable date for its insertion. In order to understand the full significance of Thomas Hampton's enthusiasm for the Yorkist cause, it is necessary for us to remember that it was in 1471 that Edward IV, after having been exiled from England during the past winter, returned, and in the two decisive battles of Barnet (April 14th) and Tewkesbury (May 4th) crushed the Lancastrian hopes for ever, as in those battles both Warwick "the Kingmaker" and Edward, Prince of Wales, the Lancastrian heir to the throne of England, perished, whilst Henry VI, imbecile and invalid, died a prisoner in Yorkist hands in the Tower.

Margaret of Anjou, a childless widow, utterly broken down with grief, renounced all claims and rights to the English throne, and returned to her home in Anjou in 1475, where she died in 1482. With all the danger past and the Yorkist party triumphant, it is quite possible that Thomas Hampton, the quiet country squire, celebrated his King's victories by inserting glass in the church windows wherein the "radiant sun of York shone gloriously." It may not be out of place to explain the origin of this, the favourite badge of Edward IV. It dates from the battle of Mortimer's Cross, fought on February 2nd, 1461. The morning of the battle was marked by a parhelion, or display of mock suns, which Edward, then Earl of March, took as an omen of victory. In the graphic words of Shakespeare:—

Edward exclaims : Dazzle mine eyes, or do I see three suns ?

Richard (of Gloucester) : Three glorious suns, each one a perfect sun,
Not separated with the racking clouds,
But sever'd in a pale clear shining sky.
See ! see ! they join embrace and seem to kiss
As if they vow'd some league inviolable.
In this the heaven figures some event.

Edward : Whate'er it bodes, henceforth will I bear
Upon my target three fair shining suns.

(*Henry VI*, Part III, Act II, Scene I.)

SOUTH SIDE.

The only ancient glass on the south side of the church appears in the tracery of a two-light window. It consists of a shield (c. 1480) bearing "Argent on a chevron gules, between three cinquefoils azure, three bezants," the arms of the Hampton family, the whole set upon a plain quarry field. A shield bearing these arms may be seen amongst the heraldry on the north choir screen in Winchester Cathedral.¹

WEST WINDOW.

This contains two shields. The first is a parody, in modern sheet glass, of the Hampton arms, and calls for no comment. The second is of late fifteenth-century date, perhaps as late as 1485, and therefore forms no part of the glazing inserted by Thomas Hampton. It bears the arms of Wayte impaling Skilling as follows: "Argent a chevron gules between three bugle horns stringed sable" (modern glass of 1917) for Wayte, impaling "Argent two chevrons gules, on a chief of the second three bezants" for Skilling. This shield is by a different artist, and is the latest glass now remaining in the church.

In conclusion, I desire to thank Canon Madge, late Rector, and the Rev. C. Lloyd, present Rector, of Stoke Charity, for their kindness and most valuable assistance in supplying information concerning the history of the Hampton family.

¹ "Armorial Bearings on the Presbytery Screens in Winchester Cathedral," by N. C. H. Nisbett, Esq., A.R.I.B.A. ("H.F.C. Proceedings," Vol. V, p. 179).