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# William Peckitt's Great West Window At Exeter Cathedral

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University of Plymouth

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**WILLIAM PECKITT'S GREAT WEST WINDOW AT  
EXETER CATHEDRAL**

**C S Atkinson**

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth

In partial fulfilment for the degree of

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

October 2011

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the Great West Window at Exeter Cathedral designed by William Peckitt of York (1731-95). Peckitt was arguably the most important glass designer of the eighteenth century and undertook prestigious commissions at York, Oxford and elsewhere. In 1764 he was contracted by the Dean of Exeter, Jeremiah Milles, to supply glass to complete the restoration of the Cathedral's glazing and to make the new window, which has often been considered to be his masterpiece.

Peckitt's Great West Window is no longer extant (although portions of it have been salvaged), having been replaced in 1904 with a window, designed by Messrs Burlison and Grylls, which was itself destroyed by enemy action in 1942. The Burlison and Grylls window was more in keeping with the Gothic revival aesthetic typical of the later nineteenth century and its proponents had argued forcefully that Peckitt's Great West Window was an aberration that needed to be removed. The thesis provides initially an account of the debate that raged in the national press and beyond about the propriety of replacing Peckitt's window. This documentary evidence gives a valuable insight into attitudes towards the adornment of churches at the turn of the century: should respect for the extant fabric include Peckitt's one-hundred-and-fifty year-old contribution or should the building be renovated with a modern medieval-revival window.

Until recent times it was largely the case that eighteenth-century glass was regarded as wholly inferior to the medieval glass that preceded it and it is widely accepted that glass making in Britain only recovered with the nineteenth-century Gothic revival and the modern glass that followed it. In this thesis it is suggested that the denigration of eighteenth-century glass and in particular that of William Peckitt at Exeter, ignores its

qualities, practical and intellectual, and the Great West Window is used to reveal the seriousness of such endeavours. Peckitt's work is positioned within the context of the particular circumstances of the restoration of Exeter Cathedral in the mid-eighteenth century under two successive Deans, Charles Lyttelton and the aforementioned Jeremiah Milles, both of whom were nationally significant antiquarian scholars. Peckitt was knowledgeable about medieval glass techniques, worked sensitively in restoring medieval glass and when designing a completely new window for the Cathedral worked closely with Milles to provide an iconographical scheme that was appropriate for the Cathedral, its history and its patrons. The evidence brought forward suggests that it is wrong to presume that glass designers like Peckitt had little understanding of medieval glass manufacture nor any interest in using the medium of glass appropriately in the context of a medieval building.

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## Abbreviations

BSMGP      British Society of Master Glasspainters

DAAS      Diocesan Architectural Advisory Committee

SOA      Society of Antiquaries



## Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Master of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee.

Relevant seminars and conferences were regularly attended at which work was often presented; external institutions were visited for consultation purposes and research findings prepared for publication.

### ***Presentation and Conferences Attended:***

Research Seminars within the Faculty of Arts at the University of Plymouth

History and Heritage of Glass, University of Birmingham

Defining the Holy, University of Exeter

Looking Back, Going Forward: 20th century attitudes towards religious buildings

BSMGP Annual Conference: Exeter

Creativity in Glass: Sheffield

Gothic, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Association of Art Historians, Bristol

BSMGP Annual Conference: Sheffield

Glass Painting: 1800 – 1900, London

Joshua Reynolds and the Art of Celebrity: Tate Britain, London

The Georgian Interior, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The Eighteenth Century Now: Recent and Future Directions, York

BSMGP Annual Conference, Manchester

Futures: Nationalism, Internationalism and Regionalism, Barber Institute, Birmingham

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## Introduction

This thesis examines the eighteenth-century glazing programme at the Cathedral Church of St Peter in Exeter with particular reference to the glazing of the Great West Window and the work of William Peckitt of York (1731-1795). Peckitt's window, considered by some to be one of his major achievements, fell from favour in the first decade of the twentieth century, a proposition to remove it leading to a lengthy and bitter set of arguments that raged privately and publicly for some considerable time.

The eighteenth-century glass had been commissioned by Dean Jeremiah Milles (1714-1784) as part of on-going improvements and repairs, the chosen artist being William Peckitt, a glass-painter of considerable renown. Whilst there is a volume of literature available, both on Peckitt and his commissions, to date, there has been no in-depth survey dedicated entirely to this window or to the glazing activity throughout the cathedral at this time. The reasons for this are complex, but are allied in part to the survival in the cathedral of the medieval glazing of the Great East Window.

In the opening lines of an assessment of the medieval stained glass of the Cathedral Church of St Peter in Exeter, made within the covers of a compendium of essays on the history, fabric and decorative features of the building, Chris Brooks asserts the following:

“The most important stained glass in the cathedral is that which fills the great east window.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Swanton, ed., *Exeter Cathedral: A Celebration* (Exeter: Dean and Chapter, Exeter Cathedral, 1991). p99

The window awarded this distinction contains nineteen full-length figures, a quantity of canopy-work, architectural and pattern glass, all of medieval origin. The remainder of the windows within the cathedral's buildings, those which are by inference of lesser importance, contain glass produced or installed well after this medieval watershed. Whilst undeniably offering one of the most extensive spans of medieval figural glass to be found in the British Isles, the Great East Window does not represent Exeter Cathedral's only window of historical importance, yet almost without exception, detailed attention is reserved for the medieval glass. Sarah Brown gives it prime consideration in a longitudinal history of the medium in Great Britain as does Maurice Drake in his survey of the nation's glass published in 1912.<sup>2</sup> More closely focussed surveys including those contained within broader histories of the Cathedral repeat this pattern. Erskine, Hope and Lloyd's *Exeter Cathedral: A Short History and Description*, published in 1988 is representative of this trend in offering only the briefest of entries on the post medieval glass, whilst medieval examples are awarded substantial wordage.<sup>3</sup> The only exception to this trend is offered in C W Twining's survey of stained glass: *The Art and Craft of Stained Glass*, published in 1928.<sup>4</sup> Twining was writing from the perspective of a glassmaker and included substantial references to Burlison and Grylls' glazing of the Great West Window in 1904.

In the light of this and other histories, an impression emerges of the cathedral glass within which the ancient glass is dominant. This impression is intensified on

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<sup>2</sup> See Sarah Brown, *Stained Glass: An Illustrated History* (London: 1994). and Maurice A Drake, *A History in English Glass Painting: With Some Remarks Upon the Swiss Glass Miniatures of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: T Werner Laurie Ltd, 1912).

<sup>3</sup> Audrey Erskine, Vyvian Hope, and John Lloyd, *Exeter Cathedral* (Exeter: Exeter Cathedral, 1990). See also F Drake and F M Drake, "Two Papers Dealing with the Ancient Stained Glass of Exeter Cathedral and More Especially with the Restoration of the Great East Window," (Exeter: 1909).

<sup>4</sup> C W Twining, *The Art and Craft of Stained Glass* (London, Bath, Melbourne, Toronto, New York: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd, 1928).

investigation into the depth and range of available material on the cathedral glass alone. Whilst broad surveys do exist, they tend to be associated with periods of conservation and repair to the fabric. Invariably, these are prepared by glaziers and surveyors commissioned in association with conservation work. In 1909, for example, glaziers F & FM Drake published two papers on the ancient stained glass of the cathedral in association with a commission to repair the Great East Window and incidentally, comment on the remainder of the Cathedral's lights. Similarly, F W Skeat published a series of papers on the glass shortly after he was commissioned to report on bomb damage sustained when an incendiary bomb caught the north side of the Cathedral in 1942.<sup>5</sup> Unusually, this focussed on the Victorian and Edwardian glass, but at the time of Skeat's appraisal, the East Window had been removed for safe keeping during the war and little eighteenth-century glass had survived the Victorian restoration programme. More academically prompted evaluations concentrate on the medieval glass alone, or focus specifically on the Great East Window. The most thorough of these is Brooks & Evans' *The Great East Window of Exeter Cathedral*, published in 1988 in which the authors draw on data gathered during detailed archaeological and architectural survey work undertaken during that decade, together with archive material to establish an entire glazing history of the window in question.<sup>6</sup> The authors' meticulous enquiry reveals each stage of the window's evolution and eventually, confirms the medieval provenance of the majority of its coloured glass.

One exception to the trends described above is apparent in Arthur Huxley Thompson's *The Story of Exeter Cathedral* in 1933 wherein the short section devoted to

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to the papers listed above, see, for example Francis Skeat, W, "Notes on the Salvage of the Damaged Glass of Exeter Cathedral," *Journal of Stained Glass* IX, no. 1 (1943). pp80-89

<sup>6</sup> Chris Brooks and David Evans, *The Great East Window of Exeter Cathedral: A Glazing History* (University of Exeter, 1998).

the windows offers a considered, if brief account of all the windows then in situ.<sup>7</sup> Special mention is made of selected examples of Victorian windows, including Burlison and Grylls' Great West Window. Another exception is provided in an historical account of the Cathedral's fabric and furnishings published by the Rev Percy Addelshaw in 1899 shortly after the completion of major restoration work overseen by Sir George Gilbert Scott.<sup>8</sup> Addelshaw, whilst at pains to celebrate the building's Gothic legacy, has much to say about the quality and sensitivity of Scott's work. These two accounts, together with a survey of the Cathedral's vanished glass compiled by Skeat in 1952<sup>9</sup> award a valuable glimpse of Victorian glass destroyed during the 1942 bombing raid. Demonstrably then, the majority of literature on the Cathedral's glass either marginalises post medieval examples or excludes them entirely. Although Brooks and Evans establish a comprehensive record of glazing initiatives throughout the life of the cathedral, no dedicated survey of the later glass was formulated at this time. Other than this, attention has been focussed on the Victorian and Edwardian glazing. No survey of glazing during the eighteenth century has been compiled.

This dissertation focuses on aspects of this hitherto neglected area. Taking as a starting point, the series of protracted and bitter arguments that broke out on the proposal to remove William Peckitt's Great West Window of the eighteenth century; this project seeks to offer a dedicated exposition and evaluation of glazing undertaken during the period of the eighteenth-century restoration.

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<sup>7</sup> Arthur Huxley Thompson, MA, *The Story of Exeter Cathedral: The Cathedral Church of St Peter in Exeter* (London, Paris, New York: Raphael Tuck and Sons Ltd, 1933). pp63-65

<sup>8</sup> Percy Addelshaw, *The Cathedral Church of Exeter: A Description of Its Fabric and a Brief History of the Episcopal See*, ed. Gleeson White and Edward F Strange, *Bell's Cathedral Series* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1899).

<sup>9</sup> Francis Skeat, W, "The Vanished Glass of Exeter Cathedral," *Journal of the British Society of Master Glass Painters* XI, no. 2 (1952-53). pp80-89

Both Thompson and Addelshaw mention the Great West Window, and the work of William Peckitt of York. The eighteenth-century window and the circumstances of its removal in 1903 have been the subject of much controversy. This is succinctly represented in the words of both commentators. Whilst Thompson reflects the opinion of F W Drake, who considered the Peckitt window to be of historical and artistic interest, Addelshaw is not so complimentary. The strength of his antipathy to restoration work undertaken during the eighteenth-century is reflected in his description of the window tracery and glass. Having commented on the unrivalled balance and exquisite perfection of the tracery of the nave windows, the author continues:

“Unfortunately, that which first demands our attention, the Great West Window is a strange blending of excellence and ugliness, owing to the wretched glass inserted at the deadest period of church art, the middle of the last century .....”<sup>10</sup>

On the one hand, the Peckitt window is represented as an item of historical and artistic importance, whilst on the other, it is a carbuncle on the face of an otherwise exquisitely decorated friend. The opposition of opinion and the strength of feeling illustrated here echoes that manifest at the time of the window’s removal.

The proposal to remove the eighteenth century glass from the Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral and to replace it with modern glass more suited to the character of the building was made in 1903. The Cathedral had recently undergone extensive restoration to the interior under the direction of Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811 – 1878). New glass was duly executed by the firm of Burlison and Grylls and the Temple Memorial Window, as it was named, was dedicated in 1906.

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<sup>10</sup> Addelshaw, *The Cathedral Church of Exeter: A Description of Its Fabric and a Brief History of the Episcopal See*. p44

The arguments for and against the removal of Peckitt's window are revealing. Values that underpin Addelshaw's aversion to the eighteenth-century refurbishments to the Cathedral within which the mediaevalising ideals of the Gothic Revival predominates have persisted to the current day. Thompson's comments, on the other hand, are representative of an emerging critical framework within which the window could be evaluated on its own terms, as the product of an important stained glass artist of the time. This aspect of the cathedral's glazing history therefore provides an opportunity to examine aspects of the perception and reception of stained glass in an historical building. Arguments pertaining at the time of the removal of Peckitt's window are explored in Chapter One with a view to establishing the key factors governing the decision to remove the Peckitt window. Whilst providing a fascinating insight into ways in which the management of historic buildings was transferring from the private or ecclesiastic to the public domain, examination of the arguments parenthetically reveals the extent of Deans Lyttelton and Milles' authority at the time of the installation of the Peckitt Window and further proffers an alternative framework within which to evaluate the eighteenth-century commission.

Investigation of the eighteenth-century glazing of the west window is facilitated by a considerable body of scholarly enquiry. This addresses two aspects of the refurbishment programme, namely factors surrounding the commission of the West Window and accounts of the work and life of the artist in question, William Peckitt of York.

Refurbishment of the cathedral at this time has recently been researched by Sam Smiles in relation to the development of antiquarian enquiry, the development of historical methodologies and the role that visual analysis of architectural detail in this

development.<sup>11</sup> This opens up discussion of the refurbishment programme that was instigated in 1750 by Dean Charles Lyttelton, an antiquarian whose ordering of the cathedral's collection of original fabric rolls and other records of its construction and decoration gave him particular insight into the history and heritage of the building. As Sam Smiles has argued, the refurbishments of this period were acutely influenced by Lyttelton's antiquarian activity.<sup>12</sup> The improvements were completed by Lyttelton's successor, Dean Jeremiah Milles, also a prominent antiquarian. He drew substantially on fresh understandings of the cathedral's historic past gained during the ordering of the muniments, and articulated these within the new designs. It was Dean Milles who, much to the dismay of the Clerk and Chapter commissioned the new West Window. In selecting the foremost glass artist of the time to complete this commission Milles sought to renew the status of the historic building. The discussion in Chapter Two outlines the ecclesiastic and academic careers of Deans Milles and Lyttelton and explores their understanding of the history of the building in their care. It becomes apparent that the improvements of the eighteenth century were based on their understanding of the history of the cathedral church and furthermore, that these were considered as a whole. This is in sharp contrast to the restoration programme of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, completed in stages under the direction of three successive architectural surveyors. During this latter period new glazing was commissioned as and when funds were made available via subscription or bequest, each new window inevitably reflecting the wishes of each of the donors. The

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<sup>11</sup> S Smiles, "Data, Documentation and Display in Eighteenth Century Investigations of Exeter Cathedral," *Art History* 25, no. 4 (2002). S Smiles pp500-519, *Eye Witness, Artists and Visual Documentation in Britain 1770-1830* (Aldershot and Brookfield: Ashgate Press, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> See Smiles, "Data, Documentation and Display in Eighteenth Century Investigations of Exeter Cathedral." for a comprehensive evaluation factors underpinning decisions made at this time. See also Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004).



eighteenth-century glazing programme, on the other hand, was financed by the Chapter and was considered as a whole. The employment of Peckitt to undertake repairs to the East Window and subsequently to execute the Great West Window was significant. Peckitt was the foremost glass-painter of his time. In commissioning him, Deans Lyttelton and Milles were making a deliberate statement about the status of their Church and their programme of improvements. This aspect of the commission is examined in Chapter Two of this thesis.

Peckitt's work has received considerable attention in recent years. Trevor Brighton has made a lengthy study of the artists' life, work and working methodology, whilst Sarah Baylis has dedicated a portion of her thesis on eighteenth-century stained glass to his work at Exeter and elsewhere in the country.<sup>13</sup> Both of the authors mentioned take as their starting point the work of J A Knowles, who published extensively on Peckitt and other York stained glass artists.<sup>14</sup> Whilst Brighton concentrates on the chronology of the artist's life and on the efficacy of Peckitt's recipes for colouring and staining glass, Baylis has discussed the artist's work in the light of a wider investigation

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<sup>13</sup> Trevor Brighton has published numerous papers on the artist. The principal papers are JT Brighton, "The Enamel Glass-Painters of York: 1585 - 1795 (in Three Volumes)" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, York, 1978), JT Brighton, "William Peckitt (1731-95) and the Quest for Colour in 18th-Century Glass," *The British Art Journal* V, no. 1 (2004), Trevor Brighton and RG Newton, "Unravelling an 18th Century Mystery - Peckitt's Red Glasses," *Stained Glass Quarterly* 81, no. Fall (1986), Trevor Brighton and Brian Sprakes, "Medieval and Georgian Stained Glass in Oxford and Yorkshire: The Work of Thomas of Oxford (1385-1427) & William Peckitt of York (1731-95) in New College Chapel, York Minster and St James High Melton," *Antiquaries Journal*, no. 70 (1990). pp380-415 Sarah Baylis' comprehensive survey of picture glass c1750-1850 is available as follows: S Baylis, "Glass-Painting in Britain C1760-1840: A Revolution in Taste" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Cambridge, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example J A Knowles, "Glass Painters of York. William Peckitt," *Notes and Queries* IX (1921). J A Knowles, "William Peckitt, Glass Painter," *Walpole Society* XVII (1928-9). ; J A Knowles, *Essays in the History of the York School of Glass Painting* (New York: London Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936). J A Knowles, "William Peckitt, Glass-Painter," *The Yorkshire Architectural and York Archaeological Society Annual Report* (1953-54). pp99-114 J A Knowles, "Glass Painters 1750-1850 (William Peckitt and Mary Peckitt)," *Journal of the British Society of Master Glass Painters* XIII (1960-63). pp514-516

of 'picture' glass produced between 1750 and 1850.<sup>15</sup> In more recent years, eighteenth-century glass has attracted increased scholarly attention, awarding the work of Peckitt and his contemporaries greater attention and more extended evaluation within the contexts of the social, historical and artistic contexts of its making. In particular, the stained glass collections at Sir John Soane's Museum in London and that of Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill have been the subject of investigation, as has the eighteenth century glazing at St George's Chapel Windsor Castle.<sup>16</sup> The science of Peckitt's glass recipes has been evaluated within the contexts of both science and theories of light and colour by Trevor Brighton and Sarah Lowengard.<sup>17</sup>

These investigations formulate a substantial foundation for analysis of the artist and the window at Exeter, and facilitate detailed analysis of the refurbishment programme of the eighteenth century. This research informs the exposition of the refurbishment programme and of Peckitt's window given in Chapter Two as well as providing valuable insights into the production of stained glass that underpin discussions in Chapter Three. The abundance of biographical data about the artist offers an opportunity to examine the life and work of an important figure in the history of stained glass and to

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<sup>15</sup> Baylis, "Glass-Painting in Britain C1760-1840: A Revolution in Taste". S Baylis, "'the Most Untractable of Saxon Uncouthness': Eighteenth-Century Painted Glass in Ely Cathedral and the Removal of the Choir," *The Antiquaries Journal* LXVIII, no. 1 (1988). pp99-114

<sup>16</sup> Sandra Coley, ed., *The Stained Glass Collection of Sir John Soane's Museum*, vol. XXVII, *The Journal of Stained Glass* (London: British Society of Master Glass Painters, 2003). Michael Peover, "Horace Walpole's Use of Stained Glass at Strawberry Hill," *The British Art Journal* V, no. 1 (2004). pp22-29 Sarah Brown, ed., *The History of Stained Glass of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle* (Windsor: Deans and Canons of Windsor, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Brighton and Newton, "Unravelling an 18th Century Mystery - Peckitt's Red Glasses.", Sarah Lowengard, *The Creation of Color in Eighteenth-Century Europe* [e-book] (Columbia University Press

American Historical Association, 2008 [cited 12 January 2010]); available from [http://www.gutenberg-e.org/lowengard/A\\_Chap03.html](http://www.gutenberg-e.org/lowengard/A_Chap03.html). With a special section on Peckitt and George Berg. Peckitt's recipe book is discussed in detail with the relationship between science, colour and belief being given considerable attention.

contribute to our understanding of his position as a major figure in the history of the medium.

The final dissertation establishes a broad overview of the glazing history of the Cathedral Church of St Peter in Exeter, paying particular attention to a particular period of restoration and refurbishment initiated during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Ultimately, this project sets out to recuperate the work of William Peckitt at Exeter. In extending the enquiry to examine his working aesthetic and the personal philosophy of his patrons, this dissertation will contribute to existing knowledge about an important historical figure.

## Chapter One: The Arguments

The Georgian glass that filled the Great West Window remained in situ for well over a century. This window, completed by William Peckitt of York (1731 –1795), had been designed and executed under the directorship of Jeremiah Milles (1714–1784), Dean of Exeter Cathedral, and was installed in the latter half of the eighteenth-century towards the culmination of a period of major restoration of the Cathedral Church. Now considered to be Peckitt's greatest achievement, the window was very much admired at the time of its completion in 1766 and in recent years has been celebrated as a landmark in the development of the medium.

The window was a key and defining element in Dean Milles' restoration programme. It was an ambitious and prestigious commission that, as will be explored in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis, was indicative of the strength of the Dean's resolve to render the Cathedral equal, if not superior to any in the land. Milles had secured sponsorship from a significant number of prestigious County families whose coats of arms were included in the final design. Throughout the century, Devon was the fourth most populous county in England, and at the time of Milles' preferment, was one of the wealthiest.<sup>18</sup> The patronage of the principal families of this wealthy diocese, together with Dean Milles' reputation as a scholar and antiquarian, and not least, his adroit publicity of the finished window, ensured a high degree of interest in the finished

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<sup>18</sup> Arthur Warne, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century Devon* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1969). Page 11.

Warne reports that the woollen industry, that brought considerable wealth to the Peninsular Counties, continued to thrive well into the mid-eighteenth century. The continual wars of the century gradually deprived the industry of its overseas markets, and the expansion of the Yorkshire woollen industry later in the century completed its decline.

project.<sup>19</sup> The window was generally well received, one measure of the continuing success of the refurbishment being a royal visit to the Cathedral made by King George III, his wife and three of the princesses in 1789. Accounts of the visit reveal the King to have been '*much pleased*' with his visit.<sup>20</sup>

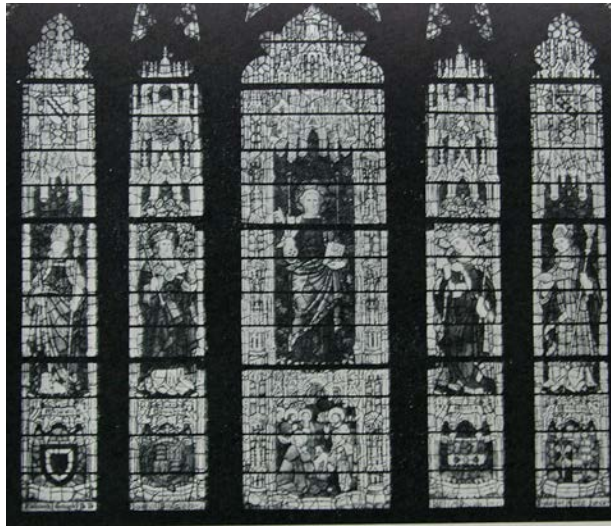
After the initial flurry of interest at the time the Peckitt window attracted less and less attention but almost a century and a half later the glass was returned to the spotlight once again. In January of 1903, as the Victorian restoration to the interior of the cathedral church neared completion, the Dean and Chapter commissioned new glass to fill the entire Great West Window. On the recommendation of the Cathedral's architectural advisor and overseer of the latter stages of the restoration project, George Frederick Bodley (1827 –1907), a firm of prominent glaziers of the Victorian Gothic Revival, Messrs Burlison & Grylls of London, were selected to undertake the commission.<sup>21</sup> The new window was duly executed under the supervision of Bodley to a design brief recommended by the glaziers and endorsed by the architect. Ultimately revised by the Dean and Chapter, work on the new 'Temple Memorial Window' was completed in 1904. It commemorated the late Archbishop of Canterbury and former Bishop of Exeter, William Frederick Temple (episcopate 1869–1885).

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<sup>19</sup> Dean and Chapter Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4669/1, Description of the Great West Window, Fully Completed," (Exeter: 1767), Jeremiah. Milles, *A Description of the New West Window in the Cathedral Church of Exeter*. (Exeter :: [s.n.], 1767.).

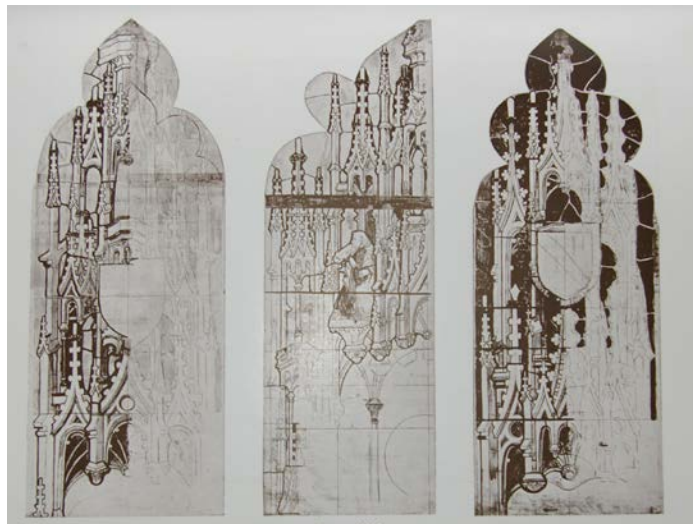
<sup>20</sup> John Gidley, *Notices of Exeter, Comprising a History of Royal Visits to the Ancient and Loyal City from Ad 49, to Ad 1863* (EXETER: Henry Besley, 1861). p93

<sup>21</sup> Martin Harrison, *Victorian Stained Glass*, London ed. (London, Melbourne, Sidney, Auckland, Johannesburg: Barrie & Jenkins, 1980). See p76 for a brief outline of the company.



**Figure 1: Portion of The Temple Memorial Window, Burlison and Grylls, 1903.**

Unknown. Reproduced in Twining, C W, *The Art and Craft of Stained Glass*, 1928, p18 This is amongst a handful of photographs of the Burlison and Grylls Window that have come to light to date. However, drawings for the window, reproduced in C W Twining's book on Stained Glass give some indication of the quality and design concept of the Temple window.<sup>22</sup>



**Figure 2:** Cartoons for canopies, West Window, Exeter Cathedral. H Grylls.  
Reproduced in Twining, C W, *The Art and Craft of Stained Glass*, 1928.

This window was itself destroyed in 1942 during a series of raids known collectively as the 'Baedeker' raids. The replacement, executed by Reginald and M C Farrer Bell during the 1950's, replicates some design elements from the upper tracery lights of the Burlison and Grylls window. [See Figure 3 below]

<sup>22</sup> Twining, *The Art and Craft of Stained Glass*. 1928 p16



**Figure 3:** Exeter Cathedral, Great West Window, Reginald and M C Farrer Bell. Circa 1950.  
Photo: Col. Woodcock, 2003.

The upper portions of this window replicate the original design by Burlison & Grylls for the window installed in 1903-4.

These actions - the removal and the replacement – returned Peckitt’s window to sharp focus as it became the subject of animated and often recriminatory debate. Whilst concerned in part with the aesthetics and craftsmanship of the window, the arguments that arose following the proposal to remove it are equally revealing of the complex sets of factors that governed later attitudes towards the eighteenth-century window and of questions that should be asked in any enquiry into its commissioning and execution. This chapter explores the arguments with a view to discovering the major lines of contention, and in doing so, to reveal strands of enquiry that are specifically relevant to the eighteenth-century example and to discard those that are not. Further, the arguments provide primary evidence of the appearance and quality of the glass that is lacking elsewhere. Apart from Dean Milles’ published account of the new window from which a comprehensive idea of the original can be assembled, few contemporary first hand reports of the window survive. These later evaluations are essential to any investigation of the glass in question, but if they are to be of use in this re-assembly, they must be prised from the cultural values that underpin them. This chapter therefore has a two-fold purpose. Firstly it seeks to investigate the range and diversity of opinion expressed at the time of the removal of Peckitt’s glass with a view to establishing a framework within which to describe and evaluate the eighteenth-century work. Secondly, it seeks to establish aspects of the aesthetics and visual impact of the window that would not be possible otherwise.

Major restoration to a 'much loved building', as one of the correspondents described the Cathedral, is bound to attract a degree of discussion and speculation, but in this instance, feelings ran particularly high. What started out as a frank, but not overly hostile exchange of views between the Church Authorities and the Diocesan Architectural Advisory Society, (DAAS), evolved into a lively and bitter dispute as



salvoes of accusation and retort between aggrieved parties were aired more publicly. It is evident that the initial debate was conducted within the boundaries of the wider Cathedral Community. The breadth and depth of feeling of the internal debate is revealed in the volume of correspondence, records of addresses to 'closed' committees, memorials and minutes of various Diocesan and other interested parties. Although a proportion of this documentation was available for public perusal, namely in the quarterly reports of the Transactions of the DAAS, to all intents and purposes, they were not 'made' openly public.

At this stage, the debate was and internal one. Eventually however, the altercations spilled out into national and local press when those responsible for the commissioning of the new window felt compelled to defend their decision in response to growing public criticism of their action from a number of well-informed and respected 'authorities' on the subjects of the stained glass, religious architecture and architectural restoration.

Not one aspect of the long restoration programme of the late nineteenth-/early twentieth- century as a whole was without its commentators, but the removal of the Peckitt window in 1903 initiated a particularly heated and even personal exchange of opinions between Dean and Chapter and a number of interested parties. The extent of group and individual critique, together with the range of opinion expressed, bears witness to a dimension in Cathedral restoration during the nineteenth century that was not apparent in the eighteenth. This suggests that by the middle to latter part of the nineteenth century, the Church had become a public institution and the preservation of the Nation's cultural, architectural and historical heritage was passing from the private (institutional) to the public domain.

This contrasts significantly with the eighteenth-century restoration programme.

Although there is evidence to suggest that the Chapter were not always happy with the extent of expenditure, there is little evidence that would suggest that members of the immediate and wider ecclesiastic community felt it incumbent upon them to offer an opinion on the programme itself.<sup>23</sup>

In contrast to the later Dean, Lord Marlborough, who to his great frustration as will be seen was repeatedly petitioned by interested parties, Deans Lyttelton and Milles were at liberty to implement improvements to the cathedral as they saw fit. When they oversaw the restoration of the Cathedral Church in the latter half of the eighteenth century, their purpose transcended the immediate necessity of effecting repairs to the crumbling fabric. Their aim, to be discussed more fully in Chapter Two, was to re-establish the Church as a vibrant institution - one that was fit to operate within the public sphere. As previously stated, apart from pecuniary constraints, Deans Lyttelton and Milles were at liberty to fulfil their vision for the Cathedral without hindrance. Their authority as men of the Church, and as antiquarians and scholars was not called into question, suggesting that any analysis of the eighteenth-century improvements and the glazing programme should be conducted within the dual framework of the Deans' antiquarian interests, the authority of the Church and of their ambitions for the church itself.

This chapter explores the arguments that surrounded the removal of the window more or less chronologically as they develop with a view to identifying the key protagonists, their ideals, and to discovering the underlying factors governing

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<sup>23</sup> One exception to this is the recommendation made by the Archbishop of York to Deans Lyttelton and Milles to secure the services of a competent draughtsman to execute the figures in the Peckitt window. See Chapter Two for an account of the commission and execution of the Great West Window.

observations made both publicly and in private. In the exposition that follows, it is shown that the nineteenth-century critics of the window were concerned not only with the aesthetics, quality and craftsmanship displayed within the glazed lights of the Peckitt window itself, but also with the moral credentials of those who commissioned and paid for it. No similar concerns were expressed during the eighteenth-century programme. Rather, the wishes of the Dean were accommodated at every stage; a state of affairs, as will become apparent, that Marlborough ultimately maintained should persist, despite his vehement antipathy for the Peckitt glass.

## **The Arguments**

In Spring of 1903, the Dean, Rt. Rev. Alfred Earle, or (Alfred) 'Marlborough'<sup>24</sup> as he preferred to be addressed, expressed his wish to remove the Peckitt window in a series of letters written to the descendants of those whose coats of arms had decorated the outer lights and traceries of the offending window.<sup>25</sup> It would appear from responses held at Exeter Cathedral, that Dean Marlborough was seeking permission either to return the armorials to the families concerned, or to remove them to an alternative location within the confines of the Cathedral buildings, possibly the Chapter House. With one or two exceptions the Dean's request attracted little criticism from those immediately affected by the decision although two of the respondents did not hold back in their condemnation of the window, perhaps taking

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<sup>24</sup> The Dean, Rt. Rev. Alfred Earle (1827-1918), signed himself 'Marlborough' or 'Dean Marlborough'. Alfred Earle was the son of the distinguished surgeon, Henry Earle. He held several posts throughout the years, including the rectory of Monkton-Fareigh, Wilts (1863-1865), the vicariates of West Alvington, South Huish, South Milton, Marlborough and Devon (1865-1887). In addition he was rural Dean and Archdeacon of Totnes (1872-1887), Canon Residentiary of Exeter Cathedral (1886-1888), Rector of St. Michael's, Cornhill (1888-1895) Rector of St. Boltoph's Bishopsgate and Prebendary of St. Paul Cathedral (1896-1900). In 1888 he was appointed by Queen Victoria Bishop of Marlborough, suffragan Bishop of West and North West London. Finally, in 1900 he became Dean of Exeter, and served there until his death in December 1918.

<sup>25</sup> Exeter Cathedral, MS 7171/1 File of letters consisting of replies to enquiries from the Dean seeking permission to remove armorial glass and regarding the fate of the window as a whole. 1903-1906

the lead from the Dean himself, who had obviously been moved to complain about the appearance of the glass. In January of 1903 Sir John Thynne, of Stowe wrote:

“My Dear Bishop, .....I have read your letter [regarding the glass in the cathedral and your house] with much amusement, and I sincerely sympathise with having to gaze on orange lines (lions) and unicorns, most trying at times.”<sup>26</sup>

Lord Granville also agreed with the Dean’s negative appraisal, describing the Peckitt Window as:

“an ugly blot on the Cathedral now” adding “ .....the sooner it is removed, the better.”

He even called the judgment of his forbear into question stating:

“Robert, Earl of Granville [subscriber to the original window] was as mad as a hatter ... [and] died in February 1776”<sup>27</sup>.

Out of thirty-one respondents to the Dean’s letter, the majority agreed to his request, most of them adding a proviso that the arms were redeployed elsewhere in the Cathedral Church. Nine respondents asked that the arms be returned to the family seat(s) at their own expense, whilst one, notably The Earl of Orford, writing from Mannington in Norfolk, whilst referring to the ‘amusing’ letter, asks for two of the Saints for his “excellent worker in coloured glass” to make up a window.<sup>28</sup> This last

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<sup>26</sup> Exeter Cathedral, MS 7171/1 *ibid*, Letter from Sir John Thynne to Marlborough, January 1903

Dean Marlborough may have been referring to stained glass in the Deanery. Peckitt executed three commissions at the Cathedral in Exeter including one fulfilled in 1768 for Dean Jeremiah Milles (1714-1784). Dean Milles had commissioned a series of arms as well as mosaic for the Great Hall at the Deanery. For an account of this and Peckitt’s other commissions see JT Brighton, "William Peckitt's Commission Book 1751-1795," *Journal of the Walpole Society* 54 (1988), pp 334-453 The commission at the Deanery is listed as Commission No 141, August 1768.

<sup>27</sup> Exeter Cathedral, MS 7171/1 *ibid*, Letter from Granville to Marlborough, 13<sup>th</sup> January 1903

<sup>28</sup> Exeter Cathedral, MS 7171/1 *ibid*, Letter from Orford to Marlborough, 13<sup>th</sup> January 1903. There is no evidence to suggest that this request was fulfilled.

request suggests that not all of those contacted were in full agreement with the Dean's assessment of the aesthetic or historic value of the glass. Indeed, H P Carew, writing from Woolhanger Manor in North Devon, remarked:

"I must honestly own, I do not think the idea of removing old stained glass windows which have been with the cathedral over a century, and replacing with new, is a good one..."<sup>29</sup>

whilst Trelawney, of Cornwall was more forceful:

"Many old monuments and records of times gone by have been sacrificed in the process of Church restoration, and if everything ugly, incongruous or of bad taste and architecture, were removed, many of our old Ecclesiastical buildings would be shorn of much of their interest."<sup>30</sup>

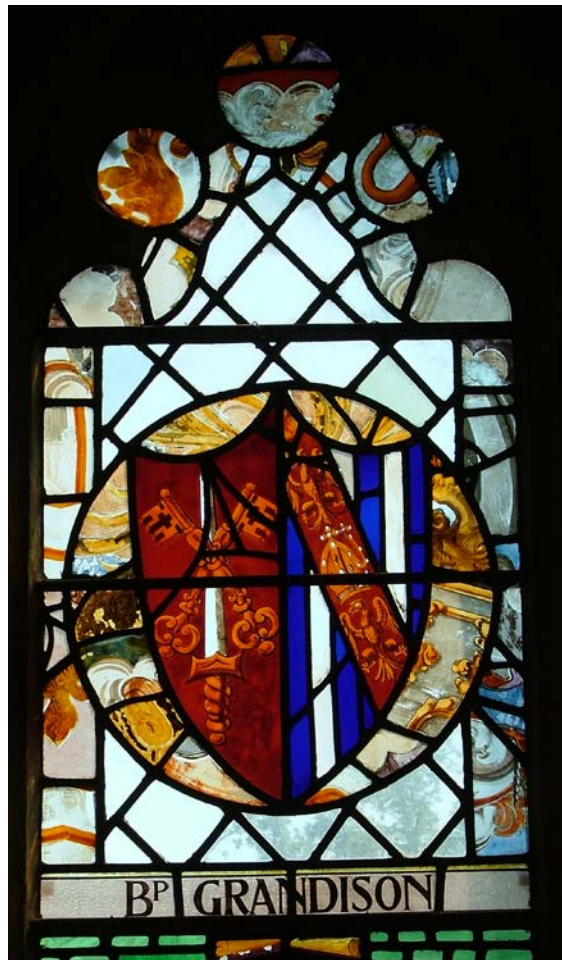
The remaining armorials and a quantity of decorative glass from the upper wheel and traceries of Peckitt's window were finally re-deployed some decades later, well after Dean Marlborough had retired, in the windows of the Cloister Walk. Building work on reconstructing the cloisters began in 1888 to the designs of John Loughborough Pearson (1817 – 1897), architect of Truro Cathedral and successor to Scott as Surveyor of the Fabric at Westminster Abbey. Only the south-west corner, which includes the cloister walk and the muniment tower was completed.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Exeter Cathedral, MS 7171/1 *ibid*, Letter from H P Carew to Marlborough, 12<sup>th</sup> January 1903

<sup>30</sup> Exeter Cathedral, MS 7171/1 *ibid* Letter from Trelawny of Cornwall to Marlborough, 12<sup>th</sup> January 1903. It is worth noting here that one of Trelawney's forbears, John Trelawny had presided as Bishop of Exeter between 1688 and 1707.

<sup>31</sup> For an account of the glass in the Cloister walk see Chanter, J F, 'The Story of the Cloisters of Exeter Cathedral, *Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society*, 354 (1939) pp 35-48 . See also, Appendix I for details of the surviving glass.



**Figure 4: Arms of Bishop Grandison, William Peckitt, 1766**  
Photo: author, 2007

It is apparent from the responses recorded above, that the majority of those most personally affected by the removal of Peckitt's window were more concerned with their family's historic association with the cathedral itself rather than with the wider implications of the proposed replacement. This would suggest that the County families continued to value their association with the Cathedral. However, with the exception of the two objections to the removal on historic grounds, none of the descendants revealed any impassioned strength of opinion either for or against the replacement of the glass. Rather, it was those less immediately affected who lodged the keenest arguments.

## The Press

This had not been the case when an earlier proposal had been made to remove Peckitt's window in 1889. In January of that year it was reported in *The Times* newspaper that the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral had resolved to remove the Peckitt '1766' window and to erect in its place a memorial to the late Earl of Devon. The author reported that the glass was much faded, and the window mainly filled with the arms of cathedral dignitaries and county families.<sup>32</sup> Support for the Cathedral came in this instance from the DAAS. The Society's Transactions contain an evenly argued defence of the proposal. As well as observations on the condition of the glass, a lack of synchronicity between the West and East windows was held to be sufficient reason for the removal.<sup>33</sup> "Strong opposition" to the proposal was reported as well of news of a resolution to ask the Mayor to call a meeting with a view to prevent the action.<sup>34</sup> In this instance, public opinion swayed the decision of the Dean and Chapter and the eighteenth-century glass survived for a further decade.

Unlike the affair of the Earl of Devon memorial, which was subject of local rather than national debate, the matter of the Temple window became a topic of widespread national interest. Discussions about the Earl of Devon memorial, although weighty, had been kept largely within the immediate circles of the Cathedral and local civic community. This was not so in 1903 when Dean Marlborough announced his intention to erect a memorial to the late Archbishop Temple in place of the Peckitt window. Opposition to the scheme was aired both publicly and privately, bitter arguments

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<sup>32</sup> "News in Brief," *The Times*, 11th January 1889. Col3, p6

<sup>33</sup> Anon, "Report of the Committee," *Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society* V, no. New Series (1889). pp182-184

<sup>34</sup> "News in Brief." 1889 Col3, p6.

between Dean and Chapter and its critics eventually spilling out into the very public vehicle of the national press and beyond.

The private and by and large well-humoured exchange of views (detailed above) between Dean and correspondents of his own choosing, escalated into open hostility when Stuart A Moore, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries was moved to write to the Editor of *The Times* in protest.<sup>35</sup> Moore made an impassioned plea for the retention of the Peckitt glass, reminding those he was addressing that Bishop Temple himself had declared that he was 'rather fond' of the window in question. Moore was particularly well equipped to make comment on the cathedral as he had previously put considerable effort into ordering the Cathedral records and archives during the early years of the restoration. Indeed, Moore's 'Calendar' provides the only coherent set of records for the period.

Frustrations experienced by Moore during this undertaking undoubtedly influenced the language in which he couched his plea to retain the glass. His strength of feeling is apparent from the outset:-

“Sir, -There seems to be a chronic mania in the authorities of Exeter Cathedral for destroying every relic of ancient art in that wonderful building whenever an opportunity occurs. It is now proposed to destroy the glass in the great west window, which is the best work of William Peckitt of York....”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Rev B P Hayward, "The Adaptation of Our Ancient Cathedrals to the Usage and Service of the Church of England," *Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society* V, no. Series II (1870).

Stuart A Moore FSA, "Exeter Cathedral, to the Editor of the Times," *The Times*, March 14th 1903.

Stuart Moore had worked at the Cathedral during Bishop Temple's tenancy when he continued work commenced by Dean Lyttelton in the Cathedral Archives, cataloguing and ordering records dating from the late eighteenth-century onwards.

<sup>36</sup> "News in Brief." *The Times*, 11th January 1889, p6.



In addition to accusing the Cathedral authorities of '*mania*', Moore further suggested that Peckitt's sensitivity to and interpretation of the surviving historic medieval glass surpassed any modern example, asserting:

"It would be a grievous thing if such an example of his work, so suitable to the building, should be swept away to make room for the usual modern painted blind"<sup>37</sup>

Whilst this observation was guided in part by Moore's declared antipathy to modern stained glass, he was convinced that Peckitt had an acute awareness of the former medieval glazing scheme.<sup>38</sup> A heated argument ensued. Those responsible for the commissioning of the new window felt obliged to defend their position in strong terms, responding initially to Moore's accusatory comments and subsequently to growing public censure. The window's supporters replied in equal measure to increasingly vehement attacks. The volume of letters on the subject submitted to *The Times* during the weeks following their publication of Moore's opinions was so great that the paper was compelled on several occasions to combine parry and riposte in one entry.

The first response to Moore came from A R Buckland, who describing himself as "*another man of Devon blood*" (Stuart Moore was born in the county) refuted Moore's assertion of Peckitt's sensitivity to the medieval glass, basing his judgment on his own recent evaluation of the glass in situ. Buckland further referred to the '*sordid history*' of the window's erection adding, on a moral as much as an aesthetic note,

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<sup>37</sup> Stuart A Moore, "Exeter Cathedral," *The Times*, 07 February 1903., p12

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. See also Note 15 above

“As for the coats of arms, which tell so curious a story of the capitular zeal and other people’s vanity, they sprawl over the window in a very unedifying fashion”<sup>39</sup>

Chancellor Walter J Edmonds, in a letter published on 16<sup>th</sup> February, concurred with Buckland’s poor opinion of the morals of the subscribers stating:

“It wants very little reflection to arrive at a reasonable conclusion as to whether the glass of a design so inspired is likely to be worthy of a place in the finest window that the fourteenth-century has bequeathed to us here in Exeter Cathedral.”<sup>40</sup>

However, Edmonds’ main argument addressed Stuart Moore’s academic and even personal integrity. Referring to the antiquarian’s ordering of the archives and subsequent calendar of the fabric rolls which he had completed during the time of the Scott restoration, Buckland questioned the Antiquarian’s grasp of history, suggesting that he was ‘erroneous’ in supposing that Peckitt could have observed any medieval glass at the cathedral at all.

Dean Marlborough was of the same opinion. In open responses to Moore’s claims, the Dean used an antiquarian strategy to undermine his critic’s integrity, suggesting that his own minute inspection of the Chapter Minutes, together with personal conversations with those involved with the Scott restoration revealed Moore’s claims to be false:

“Wishing to be accurate in my reply, I have before writing, caused search to be made in all the Chapter records, and documents, minutes etc .....during the period in which the restoration of the Cathedral was under consideration and in progress.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> A R Buckland, "Exeter Cathedral," *The Times*, 13 February 1903. p8

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Dean Alfred Marlborough, "Exeter Cathedral: To the Editor of the Times," *The Times*, February 21st 1903. p10, col B

It is worth noting here that very few of the Chapter Minutes survive, making it extremely difficult to verify Marlborough's claims.

The letter, published on February 21<sup>st</sup>, elicited a lengthy response from the Society of Antiquaries, (SOA), who came to the defence of both their Society and the window. The Society Committee had first got wind of the proposal to take down Peckitt's glass on the day before the public meeting regarding the memorial to be held at Exeter on January 30<sup>th</sup> 1903. A memorandum on the matter by C F Bell, FSA, was read at a meeting of the Society in which he reported on a decision made some two weeks previously to place the memorial in the West Window. Apart from expressing concern at the removal of "*a monument of unique importance in the history of art*"<sup>42</sup>, Bell further reminded those present of the part played by "*one of the most distinguished of earlier Presidents of the Society of Antiquaries*,"<sup>43</sup> [Dean Jeremiah Milles] .....adding:

"it is not only a memorial of his taste and zeal, but marks, from its relationship to the revival of medieval studies, a most interesting moment in the history of British archaeology"<sup>44</sup>

The Committee had proposed and agreed a resolution:

"That the Society of Antiquaries of London having considered a proposal to remove the painted glass now in the west window of the cathedral church of Exeter is of opinion that the glass has important historical and artistic value and ought by all means to be preserved in place."<sup>45</sup>

The resolution was duly telegraphed to the Right Rev. Bishop of Exeter with a request that it be read before the meeting. There is no record of this being done, a fact that angered members of the Society of Antiquaries giving rise to a further series of letters

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<sup>42</sup> C F Bell, "Exeter Cathedral," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries* 19 (1901-3). p205

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p205

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p205

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p205

to *The Times*. As each side drew increasingly on 'expert' authorities to support their case, the arguments, which were essentially between the Society of Antiquaries (in particular Stuart Moore) and the Dean himself, became increasingly heated. Eventually the Society of Antiquaries, represented by the Chair, Charles H Read, and Stuart Moore; and the Cathedral, represented by Alfred Marlborough resorted to personal insult to get their case across. In a letter published in early March, Charles Read reiterated the findings of the Society, and in response to the question of the motivation of the original subscribers, suggested:

"It would scarcely be wise to inquire too closely into the real motives of subscribers, even in church matters"<sup>46</sup>

Read further submitted correspondence between the Society and the Cathedral for publication that had been exchanged some four weeks earlier in which the Dean had refuted an implication that the Cathedral was neglectful of its responsibility to preserve the historic fabric for future generations. G F Bodley, successor to J L Pearson at Westminster Abbey, had been called in to advise on the restoration of the Western Image Screen and incidentally, became involved in advising on the execution and design of the Temple Memorial. Marlborough, who obviously felt this to be sufficient consultation, responded:

"The Dean and Chapter of Exeter .....are keenly alive to the responsibility, but they feel that from the nature of things that it is a responsibility which they cannot share with others."<sup>47</sup>

It is obvious that at this point the Dean had grown increasingly resentful of what he perceived to be interference. In a letter published in *The Times* on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1903,

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<sup>46</sup> Charles H Read, "Exeter Cathedral, to the Editor of the Times," *The Times*, March 06th 1903. p9

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Letter from the Dean to the Society, published in full.

Marlborough called the propriety of Charles Read into question, accusing him of “*citing a dead witness*”, (Bishop Temple), “*publishing a letter without consent*” (the Dean’s letter to the Society, dated February 9<sup>th</sup> 1903), “*sneering at the motives of subscribers to the [Temple] memorial*”, and finally depending on the authority of an “*anonymous*” authority regarding the value and condition of the Peckitt glass:

“I can almost hear the indignant voice of my grand old friend exclaim – Cite a dead witness? You incur disgrace! Trust to the unsigned report of an anonymous critic? You incur ridicule! It is all of a piece. Dead witness! Clandestine visit! Anonymous critic!”<sup>48</sup>

Stuart Moore, who was obviously equally irritated, felt compelled to submit a further letter for publication, declaring:

“I cannot cope with the Dean of Exeter. ....he rejects all evidence that does not suit him .....His method of controversy appears to be to abuse his opponent and his witnesses.”<sup>49</sup>

He added, as proof of the Cathedral’s cavalier treatment of the historic remains, that a fourteenth-century clerestory window discovered whilst he was working at the Cathedral, which the Dean continued to insist remained preserved in its original state was actually “cut to pieces” [and thus] destroyed.<sup>50</sup> Finally, Moore protested, erroneously on this occasion, that a glass artist (named ‘Bodley’), rather than a medieval expert was to design and erect the memorial window.

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<sup>48</sup> Dean Alfred Marlborough and G F Bodley, "Exeter Cathedral; to the Editor of the Times," *The Times*, March 11th 1903. p8

<sup>49</sup> Moore FSA, "Exeter Cathedral, to the Editor of the Times." p13

<sup>50</sup> City Press, "Exeter Cathedral - a Fortunate Discovery Has Been Made," *The Times*, September 28th 1872.

The discovery of the medieval glass was reported in *The Times* news section. Glass from an entire clerestory window was discovered in the minstrel’s gallery during restoration work at the cathedral. The glass was reported to be light and of a delicate grisaille. The glass had been taken out within living memory, the remains being sufficient to restore to the original, and to serve as a model for the remainder of the clerestory.

As advising architect for the Cathedral, Bodley responded to Moore's comments, stating in a further letter published in *The Times* some three days later that he wanted the window removed because it was ugly, and because it deformed the beauty of the church. The proposed window, to be executed by Burlison and Grylls would not be a 'curtain of light' as described by Moore, but a work of art. Quoting Sir Arthur Helps, Bodley stated that:

"A thing of ugliness is a potent for evil. It deforms the taste of the thoughtless; it frets the man who knows how bad it is; it is a disgrace to the nation who raised it; and example and an occasion for more monstrosities. It must be done away with"<sup>51</sup>

The argument might have thus returned to one of aesthetics, but the Dean was determined to have the final word. In a letter published on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, the last in this series, the Dean reiterated each of the points made in his previous letter regarding the integrity of Stuart Moore, and of the methodologies of the Society of Antiquaries. His evaluation of the window was succinct and highly personal:

"I think that the resolution [of the Society of Antiquaries] was not in accordance with the facts, because the window is worthless as a work of art and its condition is bad. I cannot change my opinion..."<sup>52</sup>

The Dean's decision was indeed, final, but his irritations did not rest here. There were other opponents to the scheme.

Thus far the arguments reveal an antiquarian concern with the aesthetics and historical importance of the window. It is clear that Moore and his antiquarian colleagues considered Peckitt's work to be in keeping with its medieval surroundings and to

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<sup>51</sup> G F Bodley, "Letter to the Editor," *The Times*, March 17 1903. p8

<sup>52</sup> Marlborough, "Exeter Cathedral: To the Editor of the Times.", March 23 1903, p7

reference them. Other supporters of the window were to draw attention also to its artistic merit.

## **The West Window**

The topic of the eighteenth-century glass in the west window was never completely laid to rest. In 1907, four years into the exterior restoration, The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings published a report drawn up by a special committee appointed by them to consider the question of the work. In July of that year, Thackeray Turner had this to say on the Peckitt window:

“The west window was before the late alterations to it interesting historically, and it contained some good glass of the greatest artistic value. In place of this now appears a counterpart of the ancient work that has value as neither historic monument, nor as a work of art”.<sup>53</sup>

Thackeray Turner’s observation touches on an aspect of the controversy that has not been examined so far. It is noticeable that with one or two exceptions, few of the commentators had much to say about the eighteenth-century glass itself, apart from condemning it for ‘ugliness’ or commending it for its ‘historic interest’. Little about the glass itself was published in the press.

The visual appearance of the window had provoked comment in several publications on the history and architecture of the cathedral published during the final quarter of the nineteenth-century. Scott’s restoration programme and the associated research into the history and development of the fabric prompted appraisals not only of his work, but also of the architectural history of the Cathedral Church, these being based on discoveries and observations made during the period. Archdeacon Philip Freeman,

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<sup>53</sup> Hugh Thackeray Turner, "Exeter Cathedral," *The Times*, July 13th 1907. p4 col F

who published a collection of papers written by him on the history of the cathedral in book form, succinctly summed up the opportunities offered by the execution of the programme:

“It will have been apparent to the reader ..... that the account they give of the Cathedral was in some measure derived from a study of the building during its restoration.”<sup>54</sup>

Although he mentioned the Peckitt glass only in passing, others were not so reticent. Two particular appraisals of the glass offer an insight into the general and opposing attitudes to the appearance of the glass. Shortly after the completion of Scott’s restoration to the Choir, a guide to Exeter Cathedral and the See was published as one of Bell’s Cathedral Series.<sup>55</sup> The author has much to say about the eighteenth-century refurbishment of the Cathedral generally, and referred to the unsightly blend of ‘excellence’ and ‘ugliness’ that the window presented, adding:

“One can only regret that the power of contriving so much ugliness had not died before the exquisite tracery was ruined by its vulgarity and crudeness.”<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand architect, W R Lethaby (1857 – 1931), was moved to add a final paragraph about the Peckitt window in a paper on the architectural history of the cathedral published in 1903.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Philip Freeman, MA, *The Architectural History of Exeter Cathedral*, Second ed. (London: George Bell & Sons, 1873). p91

<sup>55</sup> Addleshaw, *The Cathedral Church of Exeter: A Description of Its Fabric and a Brief History of the Episcopal See*. See also Note 10, p5

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* p44

<sup>57</sup> W R Lethaby, "How Exeter Cathedral Was Built," *The Architectural Review* XIII, no. 78 (1903). pp108 - 76



“In conclusion, I wish, as a student and lover of Exeter Cathedral, to express a hope that the glass in the west window will not be sacrificed for newer fashions of stained glass. It is un-obtrusive - indeed, pleasant - and is already 150 years old. It is most interesting historically. Winston supposed that the ruby glass used in it was the last made in England before the process was rediscovered in France. Its removal and the insertion of the most up-to-date plaything must injure the old stonework. As a Devonshire man I protest against the extravagance of violently destroying this window.”<sup>58</sup>

Lethaby was a Devonian by birth and has been described as one of the most influential architectural historians of the nineteenth century. His statement reveals a sense of exasperation similar to that expressed by Stuart Moore at the destruction of Peckitt’s masterpiece.

It is clear that both Lethaby and Thackeray judged the glass to be of artistic merit.

Referral to Charles Winston, author of “*An Inquiry into the Difference of Style Observable in Ancient Glass-Paintings with Hints on Glass-Painting*” brought weight to the argument.

Winston was a glass painter and an acknowledged expert on the subject who was particularly impressed with the quality of the ruby glass deployed by Peckitt.<sup>59</sup>

### **The Memorial ~ suitability of the content**

The exchanges reported above reveal the variety and depth of opinion held by the protagonists, but the Dean’s proposal gave rise to a further cause for concern. At the time of its execution, the content of the eighteenth-century window had not been questioned, but the content of the Temple Memorial and even its appropriateness as a Memorial was called into question.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p176

<sup>59</sup> Charles Winston, *An Inquiry into the Difference of Style Observable in Ancient Glass-Paintings, Especially in England, with Hints on Glass-Painting*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and London: James Parker & Co, 1867). p25

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, *The Times* had carried a letter from H R Gamble, who appealed against the removal of a window on the grounds of both its historic interest and on the grounds that it would not provide a fitting monument to a man of Temple's stature.<sup>60</sup> This sentiment echoes that of Charles Prinn, who had written privately to Dean Marlborough in January complaining of the unsuitability of the form of the proposed memorial.<sup>61</sup> (See Fig 5) Charles Prinn, a local architect and member of the Temple Memorial Committee, questioned the decision on two counts. Whilst pointing out the uniqueness of the Peckitt window, he was primarily concerned that the proposed replacement would not provide a fitting tribute to its dedicatee who was revered for his pioneering work in bringing education to men and women from all walks of life. The plan for a new Cloister Walk and Muniment tower put forward by John Loughborough Pearson [1817 – 1897], sometime architectural advisor at Exeter Cathedral had not been completely fulfilled and Prinn suggested that the completion of this scheme, which would provide housing for the Cathedral's archive as well as accommodation for public assembly and education, would be a more fitting memorial that would "*blend with the dignity of an Archbishop*".<sup>62</sup>

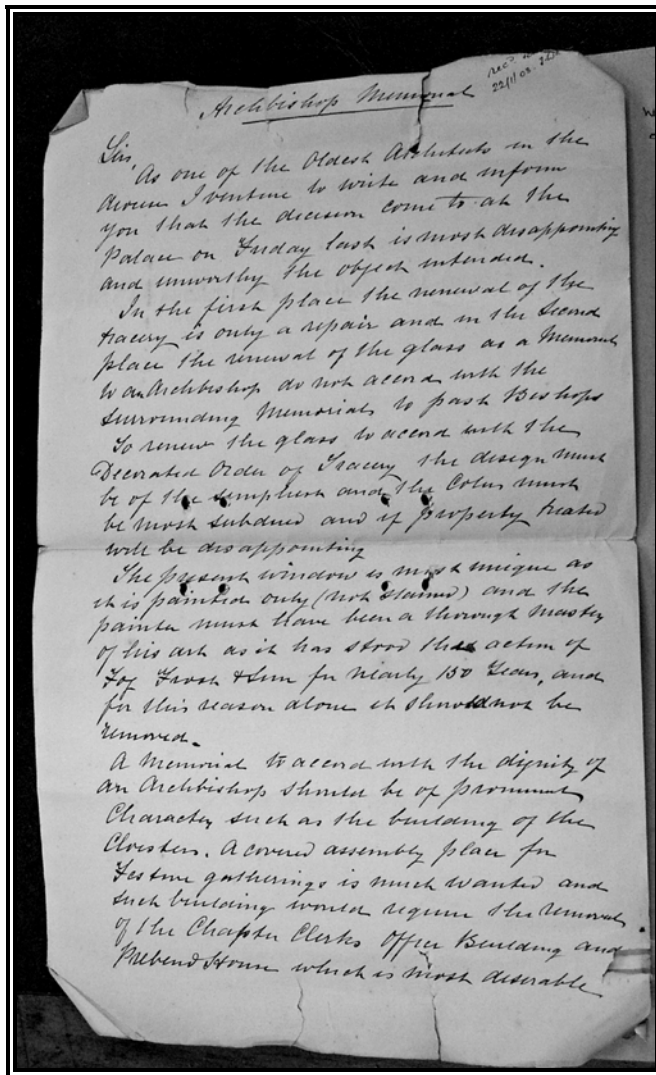
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<sup>60</sup> H R Gamble, "Exeter Cathedral," *The Times*, February 10th 1903.

<sup>61</sup> Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral and Charles Prinn, "Ms 7171/2 Letter to Lord Bishop Condemning the Removal of the Peckitt Window," (Exeter: 1903).

<sup>61</sup> Exeter Cathedral and Prinn, "Ms 7171/2 Letter to Lord Bishop Condemning the Removal of the Peckitt Window."

<sup>62</sup> *ibid*



**Figure 5: Letter from Charles Prinn to Marlborough re the Temple Memorial Window,**

Both Prinn and Gamble were troubled by two aspects of the proposal; the form of the memorial itself, and the destruction of the original window. Prinn asserted on the one hand that removal of one memorial to replace it with another was tantamount to ‘vandalism’ whilst Gamble, echoing this sentiment, suggested that the act of removing an historic window would be made all the worse by the inappropriateness of the form of the replacement.

The protests were to come to nothing. As we have seen, the wishes of the Dean prevailed and Peckitt’s Great West Window was removed.

## Levels of Engagement

It has been argued that the controversy surrounding the removal of Peckitt's window had something more to do with the fundamental principles of restoration than it had to do with the aesthetics of stained glass, or, it should be added, with the merit of the window itself.<sup>63</sup> Whilst it cannot be denied that the arguments referred to above provide valuable snapshots of values associated with the ideals of cathedral restoration and adornment, the issues go yet deeper. Examination of varying levels of engagement between Cathedral and its local and wider public reveals that the protagonists in this particular dispute were prompted by sets of standards and expectations that were more complex than the joint frameworks of the architectural restoration and the aesthetics of stained glass allow. Although paraded within the discursive arenas of architectural restoration and preservation, the arguments were in part fuelled by a range of parochial, political and personal agendas.

The participants outlined so far represent a cross-section of those who felt themselves entitled to comment on the development of the Cathedral Church. There is no doubt that the local community held the Cathedral to be an important contributor to the city's standing and was quick to intervene when it was felt to be necessary. As we have seen, when the first proposal to remove the Peckitt glass was made public in 1889 the Mayor, as civic representative, was asked to take action. Engagement with the Cathedral as a marker of status transcended the civic sphere however. The restoration was funded substantially via public subscription, with many sizeable donations being made by individuals residing within the diocese. In July of 1874, the Chapter Clerk and receiver, Edwin Force, published a broadsheet detailing donations

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<sup>63</sup> Baylis, "Glass-Painting in Britain C1760-1840: A Revolution in Taste". p15

and donors to the restoration fund.<sup>64</sup> A total of £19,939, 15s, 11 pence was raised between 1869 and 1874 via individual and congregational donation throughout the diocese. Nearly three hundred individual donors are listed as subscribers to the restoration, with thirty-six congregational collections and ten special gifts adding significant funds to the pot. The list of subscribers, published in the local press on completion of Scott's restoration, reveals an extent of public engagement with the restoration that was not evident during the eighteenth-century refurbishment.

The call for subscription to the eighteenth-century window had been confined to the heads of County families and other members of the social elite, some of whom were personally known to Dean Milles. The issue of ecclesiastic patronage during the Georgian era will be discussed more fully below, but it is apparent that during the time of the Victorian and early Edwardian restoration, ordinary members of the community were as likely to contribute towards the refurbishment of the cathedral as patrons of higher standing. In this way, individual members of the public could now become patrons. A proportion of them, as witnessed in the correspondence referred to above, were confident of their right to comment on the decision-making processes.

Unlike Deans Lyttelton & Milles' restoration, the glazing was not included in the restoration plans of Scott or his successors, although both he and Bodley made recommendations regarding the glass. All new glass inserted during the period, including the proposed memorial to Temple was therefore financed via separate subscription or by gift, and as we have seen in the preceding paragraphs, two of those concerned with this particular window were moved to express their opinions on the

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<sup>64</sup> : Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral and Misc, "Ms 7170/51

Papers Relating to the Scott Restoration 2," in *Exeter Cathedral Archive* (Exeter: 1870-1875). Force, Edwin; Chapter Clerk and Receiver, 'Exeter Cathedral Restoration Fund', July 1874. Broadsheet prepared by the Dean and Chapter – subsequently published in the *Exeter Gazette*, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1903.

project. Their request to the Dean for reconsideration of the nature of the memorial itself was ultimately declined.

## **Responsibilities and ‘Experts’**

In addition to those who subscribed to the costs of refurbishment, experts from a range of disciplines from the local community and beyond felt similarly qualified not only to comment on the proposal, but also to make recommendation based on particular areas of interest. The Dean and Chapter however, remained resolute and refused to bow to what they perceived to be interference from external bodies.

Whilst it is apparent that each of the commentators felt entitled to do so, it is equally obvious from the Dean’s replies that he believed the matter of restoring the cathedral church to be an internal matter. He evidently found it sufficient execution of his public duty to seek consultation within the confines of the ecclesiastic circle and was quick to defend this position. Marlborough had this to say in response to Charles Read’s appeal that the Cathedral Authorities be mindful of their answerability to history.

“Sir .....The Dean and Chapter of Exeter appreciate the motives of your learned and honourable society in calling their attention to the grave responsibility reasoning on them in connexion with the contemplated work in their cathedral. ....but they feel that from the nature of things that it is a responsibility which they cannot share with others. They have called in as their adviser one of the most eminent architects of the day, to whose care many of the finest buildings in England have been successfully entrusted, and who is, moreover, specially experienced in the special work which is now contemplated.”<sup>65</sup>

This was not the first time that the dictatorial attitudes of the Dean and the cathedral authorities had been called to account in this respect. Neither was it the first time that

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<sup>65</sup> Read, "Exeter Cathedral, to the Editor of the Times." 1903. p9, col f.

they had responded in this vein. Arguments between the cathedral's representatives and interested parties external to the dual institutions of Cathedral and Church were a feature throughout the restoration programme as a whole.

The Diocesan Architectural Advisory Committee felt the full strength of the Dean's belief in self-reliance from the very outset of the restoration programme. The announcement about the Temple Memorial, had been made in association with the commencement of the third phase of restoration work on the cathedral church, but aspects of the programme had attracted strong comment from the very outset. Major alterations to a 'much loved building' as one of the correspondents in the melee described the Cathedral, were bound to attract a degree of interest and Exeter Cathedral was no exception in this respect. This said, repair of the fabric had commenced as early as 1805, and proceeded without comment under the direction of John Kendall, an Exeter funerary sculptor and stone-mason.<sup>66</sup> Kendall has been described as being 'inspirational' within the context of the development of the Gothic Revival, his work at Exeter demonstrating a marked sensibility to the cathedral's medieval origins, and representative of "*a conscious attempt to revive and continue [the cathedral building's] architectural character*".<sup>67</sup>

Kendall set a standard for restoration that was to influence the character of repair works to the cathedral throughout the Victorian period, but a bitter row had broken out mid-century when, in 1867 and later, in 1869/70, the Cathedral Authorities failed to consult the Diocesan Architectural Advisory Committee (DAAS) either of their engagement of Sir George Gilbert Scott or of the commencement of the work itself.

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<sup>66</sup> Kendall's work is well documented throughout in the Chapter Act Books, the yearly audit of the surveyor and from 1812, a Fabric Order book.

<sup>67</sup> See Brooks in (Swanton, 1991), pp222-224 for an outline of restoration work carried out c1805 – 1906

The first news of the plan was given in the local press in a lengthy article published in *The Daily Telegram*, on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1869.<sup>68</sup> Members of the Society elected a special committee to address the situation and a Memorial, in which they expressed their indignation at the lack of consultation or even information on the matter, was prepared and duly signed by over forty members. This was sent to the Dean and Chapter immediately.<sup>69</sup> Members of the Society were equally uneasy about Scott's overall plans and did not hesitate to invite the architect to present a paper to the Society to defend his plans. In particular, his proposal to retain the choir screen elicited heated argument from members, who were keen to open up the choir in accordance with plans prepared previously in 1858, by a leading Gothic architect of Victorian Devon, John Hayward. The extent of their chagrin is evident in a paper delivered to the society by this architect's son, the Rev. B P Hayward on February 10<sup>th</sup> 1870 in which the memorial was read out:

“The first news was that .....Mr Gilbert Scott had been employed and that the intended new woodwork for the Choir was already in hand! Surely it was not too much for the Society to expect that a body so closely connected with it as the Dean and Chapter (the majority of whom are ex-officio members) should have taken counsel with the Society on the best way of restoring the venerable pile entrusted to their care.” Your Committee feel warmly on the subject...”<sup>70</sup>

Curiously, John Hayward had drawn up the plans at the express request of the Chapter, but the Cathedral Authorities dismissed all concerns expressed by the DAAS

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<sup>68</sup> "Restoration of Exeter Cathedral," *Daily Telegram*, 13th August 1869.

<sup>69</sup> "Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society, Second Series," (1869). pp220-225

<sup>70</sup> Hayward, "The Adaptation of Our Ancient Cathedrals to the Usage and Service of the Church of England." pp226-229



and even questioned their right to comment on Cathedral affairs.<sup>71</sup> The Chapter responded to the DAAS by issuing a statement in which they asserted:

“The Dean and Chapter are aware that on one or two points they have not arrived at the same conclusions with some, whose opinions they yet view with all the respect due to the Body which they represent. They have laboured to combine two objects – sometimes so diverse in their requirements as to be nearly irreconcilable – utility and architectural propriety.”<sup>72</sup>

Scott, who had declined the invitation to speak to the Committee, was duly given absolute authority, but although his plans were carried out in full, he too, was eventually driven to comment on the degree of frustration he experienced in his dealings with the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral.<sup>73</sup>

“The Dean was so outrageous in his interference that I was driven nearly out of my senses – over and over again through this work and really could not get any part of my own way without most wretched squabbling – which often made me perfectly ill and made me hate the very name of Exeter..... Yet after all I believe him to be a good man at heart, though delighting in what half kills other people! He seemed as fond of bullying an architect as a hunter of running down a fox and for the mere fun of it!”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 7170/51: Chapter Clerk, Miscellaneous Papers Re: Scott Restoration

Statement from Exeter Chapter," in *Exeter Cathedral Archive* (Exeter: 1870-1875).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Gavin Stamp, ed., *Personal and Professional Recollections: Autobiography of Sir Gilbert Scott* (Stamford, 1995). See Scott's comments on working with the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral in which he speaks of his exasperation with the meddling of the Bishop. Stamp, 1995, pp345-9. This edition contains additional material from the original mss that was not included in the edition edited by G G Scott Jnr in 1977. George Gilbert Scott, Jnr, *Personal and Professional Recollections by the Late Sir George Gilbert Scott, Ra*, 1977 ed. (New York: De Capo Press, 1977).

<sup>74</sup> Stamp, ed., *Personal and Professional Recollections: Autobiography of Sir Gilbert Scott*. 1995. Appendix I, p489. Citing Vol IV, p186 of the original memoirs. This appendix includes sections from the original manuscript not included in the final printed edition of the Recollections.

Representatives of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings experienced a similar dismissal some thirty years later when Hugh Thackeray Turner, expressed his concern at architect G F Bodley's "*destructive genius*" in his restoration strategy for the Western Image Screen.<sup>75</sup> Thackeray Turner (1853-1937) was an architect by profession. Having been apprenticed to Sir George Gilbert Scott, he then worked under his son and at the time of writing was Secretary of the Society. It is possible that Thackeray Turner did not endear himself to the Dean and Chapter in using the example of their position regarding the Peckitt window to question the propriety of work being done on the image screen. Furthermore, Turner had repeated Stuart Moore's strategy in publicising the Dean of Exeter's private response to his original letter in which he had enquired whether the Dean intended to make any plans regarding the restoration of the west front public before the work was put in hand. The response from the Dean and Chapter was as dismissive as it was curt as the following statement from them shows:

"having taken the opinion of a competent authority for their guidance, they must decline to share their responsibility with any irresponsible authority"<sup>76</sup>

The architect was not amused. He responded:

"They were not asked to inform this society alone, but the public at large, of their intentions; and it seems that they definitely decline to do so."<sup>77</sup>

It is clear from this exchange that neither the Dean nor the Chapter had revised their opinion that only the Church and its elected agents should be involved in any decision-

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<sup>75</sup> Hugh Thackeray Turner, "Exeter Cathedral," *The Times*, 17th April 1903. p10

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Thackeray Turner, "Exeter Cathedral."

making processes when it came to Cathedral and restoration matters. This particular spat was to continue over six years with a considerable volume of letters between the aggrieved parties being published in *The Times* newspaper. The topic was eventually put to bed when a leader article entitled '*The Principles of Restoration*' was published on Saturday June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1909.<sup>78</sup> The article referred to the volume of protests against the restoration of the west front of Exeter, using this example to present a lengthy argument against: "the inevitable dullness of imitation so close that [it] implies a complete lack of inspiration"<sup>79</sup>

The disagreement about the west front was essentially focused on methodologies of architectural restoration, and in particular the issue of 'scrape and anti-scrape'.<sup>80</sup>

Virginia Chieffo Raguin has pointed out that when he founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877, William Morris was distressed about the haphazard nature of repairs to older monuments, and quotes him thus:

"We are .....driven into this course by the necessity we feel of keeping ourselves clear in future from any appearance of participation in the so-called restoration of ancient buildings, which in ALL cases where more is done than repairs necessary for keeping out of wind and weather, means really nothing but vulgarization, falsification and destruction."<sup>81</sup>

Clearly, the anonymous author of *The Times* article was of a similar opinion to Morris and was moved to write despairingly on the erosion of the nation's architectural

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<sup>78</sup> Editorial, "The Principles of Restoration," *The Times*, 12th June 1909. p10, col A

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> For a full exploration of the evolution of architectural restoration and the notion of Scrape and Anti-scrape, see Nikolaus Pevsner, "'Scrape and Anti-Scrape'," in *the Future of the Past: Attitudes to Conservation, 1174-1974*, ed. Jane Fawcett (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976). pp35-54

<sup>81</sup> William Morris in *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Annual Reports, VIII, 1884*, pp49-76, quoted in Virginia Chieffo Raguin, "Revivals, Revivalists and Architectural Stained Glass," *the Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 49, no. 3 (1990).

heritage in the name of 'restoration'. It is similarly obvious that Thackeray Turner believed the removal of Peckitt's window to be part of the erosion.

The quarrels reveal as much about the relationship between civic and ecclesiastic authorities as they do about nineteenth-century attitudes towards restoration or to stained glass. The difference of opinion between the two architectural societies and the Cathedral authorities highlights a shift in values. The Church was becoming a public institution and the preservation of the Nation's cultural, architectural and historical heritage was passing from the private (institutional) to the public domain. Whilst a proportion of the correspondents referred to above believed their opinion as experts to be of interest, others believed themselves to have a right to involvement in the decision-making process.

The arguments between the two Societies and Exeter Cathedral were as much concerned with issues of power and responsibility as they were with architectural propriety. Other 'experts' in their own field, whilst confining themselves to commentary only, believed equally in the valuable contribution that could be sourced from outside the confines of the ecclesiastic community. Whilst Lethaby and others including Stuart Moore and the Society of Antiquaries, and representatives from other, more parochial organisations, including members of the Temple Memorial Committee, had felt it sufficient to comment on the subject of the West Window and its restoration as experts in their field, both Societies obviously believed that the restoration should be a consultative process.

## **The Cathedral and its Public**

There is no doubt that levels of public engagement with the Cathedral church had increased substantially during the latter years of the nineteenth-century. Scott's

Restoration alone cost £50,000 and subscriptions, which financed almost half of the project, had been sought from the local and wider community as well as from the diocese from the outset of the programme.<sup>82</sup> Further funds were raised for individual elements of the restoration, including the re-glazing of the cathedral windows. Whilst those who contributed directly to the scheme in this way might be expected to exhibit a degree of affiliation to the Cathedral and what it stood for, and thus feel entitled to offer advice and comment, other members of the public, less qualified to do so, did not hesitate to offer an opinion on the matter of the West Window. Restoration had become a matter of public interest.

At the outset of the controversy a Miss Chitty submitted a letter for publication in *The Times* in which she commented on the Peckitt window drawing on current ideals of the aesthetics of stained glass, referring in particular to designer, Lewis F Day.<sup>83</sup> Day was a practitioner and prodigious author on design and other elements of the Arts and Crafts movement who had commented negatively on the work of William Peckitt in his book on stained glass, referring to the work of the artist as the lowest of the low. He had this to say about the artist's work at New College Oxford:

“The windows in Lincoln's Inn Chapel, London, illustrate not unfairly the dreary level of dullness as to colour and design to which seventeenth century glass declined. That it could fall still lower was shown by Peckitt of York, who is responsible for the glass on the north side of New College Chapel, Oxford.... These date from 1765”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> C Brooks, "The Building since the Reformation," in *Exeter Cathedral; a Celebration*, ed. Michael Swanton (Exeter: Dean and Chapter, Exeter Cathedral, 1991). p223.

<sup>83</sup> Miss Chitty, "Exeter Cathedral," *The Times*, February 3rd 1903. p8

<sup>84</sup> Lewis Day, *Windows: A Book About Stained and Painted Glass*, third ed. (London: B T Batsford, 1901). p246

Miss Chitty's sentiments are clear, but she was in a minority of observers who felt it important to comment publicly on the merits of the glass itself and like the Dean, found it entirely lacking in artistic or historic merit.

### **Nineteenth-century Attitudes towards the Eighteenth-Century**

It must be added, that the glass was not the only element of the eighteenth-century refurbishment of the Cathedral Church to attract negative comment. Sir George Gilbert Scott and others did not hold back in their condemnation of the Georgian restoration work which had included the re-laying of marble pavement to replace the worn encaustic tiles, colour-washing throughout and the installation of wainscoting, new stalls in the Choir and box pews in the in the Nave; all in the Gothick style. These measures, which had entirely transformed the interior of the Cathedral Church, are described more fully below. At the time of completion, the improvements had modernised and refashioned the shabby interior of the Cathedral, serving Deans Lyttelton and Milles' drive to re-iterate the status and function of the Cathedral and Church within in the local and wider communities it served. Thomas B Worth later described the colourwash as a "*disfigurement*" and the Georgian stalls and wainscoting as "*incongruous accompaniments*"<sup>85</sup>. Percy Addelshaw, writing in 1899 peppered his description of the Cathedral with negative commentary on the earlier refurbishments describing them these as being in "*the worst possible taste.*"

"The Purbeck marbles [of the columns] especially had severely suffered, and the mouldings and bases ruthlessly destroyed for better accommodation of the wainscoting to the stalls; moreover, the differences in the nature of the stone were rendered null by a hideous yellow wash with which they had been lavishly besprinkled."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Thos Burnet Worth, *Exeter Cathedral and Its Restoration* (Exeter: Self-published, 1878). p35

<sup>86</sup> Addleshaw, *The Cathedral Church of Exeter: A Description of Its Fabric and a Brief History of the Episcopal See*. p81

The language betrays a measure of distaste as well as a marked antagonism to the earlier work that was shared by the Dean and others. Sir George Gilbert Scott was less vehement in his evaluation, but was still driven to condemn the earlier endeavour thus:

“the glass has been dealt with most ignominiously .....The stained glass has, in great measure, disappeared from the windows, the pavement, once no doubt of encaustic tile, has been superseded by Portland stone and marble, which escaping absolute meanness, is, to say the least incongruous and uninteresting, while the stall work, which must have been at some time of character accordant with the beauty of the Choir .....was replaced with wainscot work of the last century, costly no doubt, and well worked .....but utterly devoid of all thought of appropriateness to its position”<sup>87</sup>

These attitudes towards the earlier work are indicative of a widespread antipathy towards the art and culture of the eighteenth-century as a whole.<sup>88</sup> The development of the Gothic style is well documented, with successive theorists and exponents reported as claiming to promote the one and only true definition of Gothic.<sup>89</sup> Contemporary attitudes to eighteenth-century Gothick were succinctly articulated in *The Times* Editorial, ‘*The Principles of Restoration*’, in which Walpole’s Gothick Mansion at Strawberry Hill was dismissed as an ‘*ugly toy*’ :

“Gothic architecture was like a growth, not a game – this is not mere theorising, it is a fact proved by all the imitation Gothic buildings and all the

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<sup>87</sup> George Gilbert Scott, "Report from Sir George Gilbert Scott to the Dean and Chapter Dated 25/04/1870," in *Exeter Cathedral* (Exeter: Exeter Cathedral, 1870). Scott was referring to the ribbon-work of fragments of medieval glass installed in the windows during the eighteenth-century in his statement re: the ‘ignominious’ treatment of the glass. pp3-5 of the report deal with the earlier refurbishments as a whole.

<sup>88</sup> For a full account of nineteenth-century attitudes towards the eighteenth-century see Christopher Martin Finn, "That Artificial Age: Nineteenth-Century Attitudes to the Eighteenth-Century" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Exeter University, 1988).

<sup>89</sup> For successive accounts of the Gothic Revival see C Eastlake, *History of the Gothic Revival*, (1872) (Leicester: 1970).; Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay on Taste*, *Pelican Histories* (London: Penguin Books, 1962 [1928])., Chris Brooks, *The Gothic Revival* (London: Phaidon, 2001).

purely imitative restorations which have been produced since Horace Walpole first started the Gothic revival with his ugly toy at Strawberry Hill”<sup>90</sup>

For the author, writing in 1909, ‘*mere imitation*’ of style was an anathema, with the superficiality of Georgian Gothic providing the very worst example. It is clear that this same author held it to be as much a moral issue as a stylistic one. As Christopher Brooks and others suggest, the Victorian Gothic Revivalist call for integrity was an holistic one. Ruskin’s ‘truths’ for example, were equally concerned with morality as they were with appearance. With this in mind, Christopher Martin Finn further points out that the Victorian commentators regarded the past as ‘wrong’. Whilst Carlyle saw the past century as one without history, Pugin and Ruskin saw the art and architecture of the previous age as indicators of moral failure.<sup>91</sup>

Designer, scholar and glass restorer, Frederick Morris Drake (1875-1923), eldest son of the leading glass painter in Devon in the nineteenth-century - Frederick Drake (1838-1921), had much to say on the cathedral glazing of the previous era, and although mindful of the harm done to the ancient glass, did defend the work of Peckitt in part. On the occasion of speaking to the Diocesan Architectural Advisory Committee on the ancient stained glass of Exeter Cathedral in 1909, he said of Peckitt:

“But for all his sins, glass painters should remember him (Peckitt) kindly. He lived in a bad age, he had no access to good material, no one to teach him. In the face of difficulties innumerable, he actually did induce the resurrection of our craft. Alone, he did his best, in that eighteenth-century slough of complacent ignorance, to feel his way towards the light. Where

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<sup>90</sup> Editorial, "The Principles of Restoration."

<sup>91</sup> Finn, "That Artificial Age: Nineteenth-Century Attitudes to the Eighteenth-Century". p5



he sowed we, a hundred and twenty years later, did the reaping, often, I fear with anything but gratitude towards him. ....”<sup>92</sup>

Whilst speaking kindly of his predecessor, Drake’s language, as did the language of the author of the editorial quoted above betrayed an obvious certainty of the superiority of Victorian thinking. Peckitt had lived in a ‘*bad age*’ and practiced his art during a ‘*slough of complacent ignorance*’ although, in Drake’s opinion, he rose above these encumbrances to ‘*feel his way towards the light*’. The analogies are moralistic and even religious in tone, and even given the nature of his audience, it must be surmised that Drake too, regarded his practice as glazier to have a moral as well as stylistic foundation.

## **Conclusion**

The range and diversity of comment about the Temple Memorial reveals a complexity of engagement with the Cathedral that was not apparent at the time of the installation of Peckitt’s window in 1766. To sum up; the window’s nineteenth-century detractors questioned the quality of the craftsmanship, the visual synchronicity within its gothic surroundings, the aesthetics and the content of the window, not to mention its moral propriety. Its supporters admired it as an important historic monument, as a work of art that was both aesthetically pleasing and in harmony with its surroundings, and as an important landmark in the history of the medium. Whilst a proportion of the commentators felt the matter to be an important moral issue, others felt it to be an issue of aesthetics and artistic practice. Ultimately however, the arguments reveal a situation that had as much to do with power and the authority of the Dean than any of

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<sup>92</sup> Drake and Drake, "Two Papers Dealing with the Ancient Stained Glass of Exeter Cathedral and More Especially with the Restoration of the Great East Window." Paper Two: 'The East Window of Exeter Cathedral. Read to the Diocesan Architectural Advisory Committee, September 18<sup>th</sup> 1908. p18

the areas of contention discussed above. No such questioning existed for Lyttelton and Milles who, as antiquarians and men of the Church, were their own 'experts'.

However, Marlborough was reliant on the expertise of his chosen experts. On the recommendation of G F Bodley, the task of designing the 1903 window fell to the glaziers, Burlison and Grylls, whose reputation as leading exponents of glass produced in strict accordance with the principals of the Gothic Revival was unquestioned. This window, unlike Peckitt's, was designed by a number of experts and practitioners in the field of ecclesiastic stained glass who made recommendations to their patron based on the historically informed observations of the Cathedral's surveyor, G F Bodley, and their own historic understanding of the Cathedral's Gothic legacy.<sup>93</sup> As such, the Temple window, and by association other examples of the period were intellectual composites, wherein the expertise of a number of bodies combined.

The eighteenth-century commission was very different. Unlike his successor, Milles experienced no such degree of contention and was free to oversee a programme of improvements without consultation that was based on his and his predecessor's observations of an ancient fabric. However, it is by no means certain that Milles' relationship with Peckitt was very different than that of Marlborough, Bodley and Burlison and Grylls. Peckitt, as will be seen, was allowed a considerable degree of artistic freedom in his execution of the glass, and was therefore able to control the visual impact of the finished window. The evidence suggests, however, that he worked to a carefully formulated scheme devised by his patron. The Dean was not challenged in his choices, although he did receive advice regarding Peckitt's skill as a draughtsman.

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<sup>93</sup> Their design was largely adhered to.

This is not to say that Dean Milles had the unconditional support that he might have wished for, either from the Chapter or the City. Neither were the reactions of those viewing the window when it was newly installed universally favourable, but none felt qualified to argue against decisions made by the Dean and Chapter in regard to the window's content or design in such sustained and impassioned terms as those who were to support or condemn it in later years.

Accounts show that Deans Lyttelton and Milles were single-minded in their approach to the restoration of the Cathedral. Dean Lyttelton had found the neglected fabric of the Cathedral Church to be in much need of repair. As we shall see, Lyttelton, a scholar and President of the Society of Antiquaries, was acutely aware of the historic foundation and development of the church and did much to restore the main body of the church to good order, interpreting and honouring the Gothic legacy of the building in a manner fitting to the era in which he lived. Dean Milles, his successor both as Dean and as President of the Society of Antiquaries, continued the restoration work, maintaining the antiquarian thrust of his predecessor's plans for improvements to the cathedral's interior.

His final achievement was the commissioning of William Peckitt to execute new glass for the Great West Window. On its completion, Dean Milles declared himself to be '*pleased*' with the restored church, a sentiment that was not to be challenged until almost a century later.

## Chapter Two

### The Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral

#### Introduction

Little physical evidence remains to support claims that Great West Window at Exeter Cathedral should be regarded as William Peckitt's 'greatest achievement'.<sup>94</sup> Some coats of arms and a quantity of decorative glass associated with them was recovered by Prebendary J F Chanter in 1922 and re-deployed in the cloister lights at his own expense, but the armorials themselves are now much faded and show obvious signs of repair.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> See Chapter One for a survey of reactions to the window. For example - Lethaby, "How Exeter Cathedral Was Built." p176

<sup>95</sup> See John Frederick Chanter, "The Story of the Cloisters of Exeter Cathedral," *Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society* 3S, no. 4 (1939). for a detailed history of the Cloisters, including Pearson's design for the new cloister walk and muniment tower.

NB also. At the time of writing, a panel containing the arms of Earl Bedford was taken down for repair. This panel is situated in an opening casement and was badly bowed.



**Figure 6: William Peckitt, *The Arms of Sir Thos Ackland*, 1766. Exeter Cathedral Cloisters  
Photo: Author, 2007**

The coats of arms are glazed into the windows on the south side of the Cloister in an aesthetic arrangement that extends across the entire run of lights, but separated from their original supports, crests and other decorative motifs this re-deployment can only hint at the original appearance of the full armorials themselves. Fragments of the decorative devices, including fantastical creatures and a quantity of floral designs are glazed into the tracery lights on the north and south sides of the cloister walk and whilst they offer further clues, the remains as a whole provide a limited basis for any serious assessment of the original appearance of the window. There is no evidence that any glass from the central, figural lights survived.



**Figure 7: William Peckitt, 1766. Detail of Shield and Fragments of decorative glass from the Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral, Exeter Cathedral, Cloisters. Window C3. Photo by author. 2010**



**Figure 8: William Peckitt, 1766. Fragments of decorative glass from the Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral. Exeter Cathedral, Cloisters. Window C2. Photo by author. 2010**



**Figure 9: William Peckitt, 1766. Fragments of decorative glass from the Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral, Exeter Cathedral, Cloisters. Window C5. Photo by author. 2010**

[See Appendix I for details of the surviving Peckitt glass at Exeter].

The finished window was well described in an illustrated broadsheet published by the Dean and Chapter on completion of the glazing in 1767 and when combined with Peckitt's own records, gives a good idea of the overall design and colouration, and reveals that the finished window presented viewers with a spectacle of seven full-length figures set along the bottom of the principal lights, surrounded by the arms of the subscribers to the window, surmounted by a range of decorative and armorial work in the great rose.<sup>96</sup> This said, the graphical reconstruction of the window facilitated by these records is still restricted. A wider study of the glazing within the contexts of Peckitt's working practice and career, the eighteenth-century programme

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<sup>96</sup> A description of the window is given later in this chapter.

A range of documents, prints and statements of account relating to the completed West Window are available. See in particular; Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 7663 & 7664, Articles of Agreement between Rev D Milles, Dean of Exeter and William Peckitt, Glass Painter and Stainer of the City of York," in *Exeter Cathedral Peckitt Papers* (Exeter: 1764-1765). Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral, "Articles of Agreement between Rev D Milles, Dean of Exeter and William Peckitt, Glass Painter and Stainer of the City of York," in *Exeter Cathedral: MSS 4663-4670* (Exeter: 1765), Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4669/2, Description of the Window, Fully Completed," in *Exeter Cathedral Archives* (Exeter: 1767), Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 47669/1-3, Printed Circular Describing the Work on the West Window," in *Archive* (Exeter: Undated), Milles, *A Description of the New West Window in the Cathedral Church of Exeter*, Exeter Rev D Milles: Dean and Chapter, "Completion Document," in *Exeter Cathedral Archive* (Exeter: 1767).

of improvements at Exeter and ecclesiastic patronage of the arts elsewhere during the period, suggests that the window's nineteenth-century supporters were justified in their claims of greatness for the window and its maker. When viewed within the context of the restoration programme as a whole, the full significance of the work emerges. A survey of Peckitt's career and working practice reveals the commission at Exeter to be one of the major commissions for ecclesiastic glass to be completed during the century.

This chapter introduces the artist's two eighteenth-century patrons at Exeter, Deans Lyttelton and Milles, and in detailing their careers as antiquarians and within the church, seeks to discover how their enquiries at Exeter as well as their aspirations for the Church influenced their programme of improvements. If the full significance of both the commission and the finished window is to be understood, it is important that it be evaluated within the context of the eighteenth-century restoration programme as a whole. For that reason, this chapter traces works initiated by Lyttelton and Milles at Exeter during their residencies with a view to discovering the influencing factors governing the decisions they made.

On his election to office in 1748, Dean Lyttelton had not found the church to be in any advanced state of decay, but the fabric and fittings bore visible signs of dilapidation. Vicissitudes of time, financial constraint, iconoclasm and more recent religious division had rendered the building, once noted for its architectural coherence and decorative exuberance drab and lifeless. Lyttelton and his successor sought to redress the balance. They undertook a detailed historical enquiry, and acting on their understanding of the Cathedral's growth, instigated an ambitious programme of repair, restoration and improvement that endured well over forty years. When William Peckitt was approached by Deans Lyttelton and Milles in the latter half of the



eighteenth century to execute repairs to the East Window, and further, to install new glass in the Great West Window at Exeter Cathedral, the improvements were well underway. The new window was a major undertaking, and much thought was given to its design and appearance. The choice of glass-painter was critical if Milles and Lyttelton were to realise their ambitions at Exeter.

Rather than replacing damaged glass with new glazing similar to that commissioned for the windows of the nave and aisles, the restorers chose to engage the services of a master glass-painter of national repute.<sup>97</sup> The new glass in the Great West Window was a major defining feature of the final restoration and in their endeavour to restore status to the Cathedral both as an historic monument and as a religious institution.

The employment of Peckitt was prestigious and sent out a clear message that the Cathedral should be considered as equal to any in the land. At the time that Deans Lyttelton and Milles were instigating their programme of improvements, major programmes of repair and improvement were underway throughout the realm in the wake of the eighteenth-century Gothic Revival with much attention being paid to the glazing.<sup>98</sup> William Peckitt had undertaken work at a number of these, major commissions being completed at Lincoln, York and elsewhere. These will be discussed in further detail below in relation to both the fulfilment of the Deans' ambitions for the Cathedral, and to the claim that the West window was one of the artist's major achievements.

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<sup>97</sup> See below for an account of the eighteenth-century glazing programme at Exeter as a whole.

<sup>98</sup> Many accounts of restorations undertaken during the Gothic Revival exist. For an overview see Kenneth Clark's seminal, *The Gothic Revival*, Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay on Taste.*, in particular, Chapters 3 and 4, "Ruins and Rococo: Strawberry Hill" and "Romanticism and Archaeology" respectively, pp34 – 77; For an appraisal of the effects of eighteenth-century programmes of improvement, especially at Salisbury Cathedral, Hereford, Durham, Lichfield, Westminster and Winchester in particular, see Jane Fawcett, "A Restoration Tragedy: Cathedrals in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *The Future of the Past: Attitudes to Conservation*, ed. Jane Fawcett (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976). pp75-115

William Peckitt was the foremost glass painter of his day. Examination of his commissions elsewhere reveals a complex working practice and an ability to respond to the varied demands of both private and ecclesiastic patrons. Comparison of work undertaken by Peckitt at York, Oxford, Cambridge and Stamford in particular, suggests that he was sensible to the aesthetics and architectural dynamic of each of the buildings in which he worked. Analysis of these commissions in relation to the West Window challenges claims made by Marlborough and others that it was out of keeping with the Gothic surroundings, and indeed, suggests that Peckitt looked carefully at the remaining historic glazing at Exeter, and that his scrutiny informed decisions he made about the aesthetics of the West Window and other glazing carried out at the Cathedral.

However, the figures and decorative devices deployed in the new West Window made no attempt to replicate the medieval glass that survived in the East Window and elsewhere. Rather, Peckitt's window was unmistakably modern in its design and execution, the figural and decorative work being executed in a modern style that referenced, but did not seek to mimic the antique glass.

### **The Cathedral Church of St Peter in Exeter**

Contrary to opinions expressed by nineteenth-century observers that the eighteenth-century refurbishment was out of keeping with the historic legacy of the building, Dean Lyttelton & Milles' programme of restoration was aware of the history and architectural development of the Cathedral Church. Indeed, both Deans' historical knowledge was acute, and when combined with a shared desire to render the liturgical space fit for modern usage, the two antiquarians realised a refurbishment between them that brought the church resolutely into the modern era whilst simultaneously re-

instating and re-articulating its historic past. This past was discovered via Dean Lyttelton's ordering of the fabric rolls, which are now acknowledged to be the most complete record of medieval cathedral building extant in the country, as well as by Dean Milles' historic enquiry throughout the diocese and the two Deans' pioneering visual analysis of the fabric and decorative features of the cathedral.

Neither Lyttelton nor Milles sought to recuperate a medieval identity for the cathedral church. The Georgian restoration was essentially a programme of modernisation; whereas the work of the later restorers was underpinned by the fundamental tenets of the Victorian Gothic Revival wherein the master craftsmanship of past cathedral builders was held up as an ideal.<sup>99</sup> It might be argued that the Sir George Gilbert Scott's restoration during the late nineteenth-century was similar in aspiration to the Georgian refurbishment, namely the re-instatement of the Cathedral Church as both institution and building, but the means of achieving that aim was decidedly different. The nineteenth- and early twentieth-century work focussed on re-instatement of the architectural and decorative coherence of the building, taking a specific point in the history of the building as a model. Both Scott and G F Bodley, who succeeded Scott as architectural advisor to the Cathedral, were attempting to recuperate a medieval identity for the Cathedral Church, resulting in a restoration that referred extensively to the mid-and late medieval era of the Cathedral's development. In contrast, the eighteenth-century restoration, cast its historic reference beyond this time to the very earliest years of the cathedral's foundation, and, as will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three, made overt and conscious reference to the foundation of the Church

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<sup>99</sup> For discussions on the history and development of the Gothic Revival see Brooks, *The Gothic Revival*. London: Phaidon, 2001; Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay on Taste*. Pelican Histories. London: Penguin Books, 1962 [1928]; Eastlake, *History of the Gothic Revival, (1872)*, Leicester, 1970. For an overview of the Victorian and Edwardian restorations see Erskine, A, and V Hope. *Exeter Cathedral*. Exeter: Dean and Chapter, Exeter Cathedral, , 1990. pp80-85

in England. This and other aspects of the restoration reflected discoveries made by Deans Lyttelton and Milles during their investigations.



**Figure 10: Exeter Cathedral from the West, Photo –Torsten Schneider on 13. Nov 2005**

To gain an insight into the two antiquarians' comprehension of the history of the cathedral, it is important to be aware of that history as it is now understood.

The Cathedral Church of St Peter in Exeter is a collegiate and not a monastic foundation, built by Charter to King Edward the Confessor, who founded the See. As it now stands, it is the third cathedral built on the site.

Like most English cathedrals, the church was built and rebuilt over many generations, but in outline and character generally Exeter presents a uniformity of design, particularly in the uninterrupted stretch of vaulting in the Nave, and beyond to the

Choir, that renders it unique.<sup>100</sup> The Reverend Canon Edmonds, writing in 1887, shortly after the completion of Scott's restoration work in the interior of the church, naturally regarded the Cathedral to be equal to any in the land and defended the building's lack of height and stature when compared to the great churches of Wells and Salisbury saying:

“There are larger churches and loftier churches; ..... but nowhere is there a cathedral of greater originality, of more complete harmony, of more obvious and striking unity.”<sup>101</sup>

It should be understood here, that in describing the ‘striking unity’ of the church, Edmonds was referring to a marked visual coherence of design; most obviously along the length of the nave vaulting where the tiercerons are especially elaborate, the design being repeated along the entire length of the nave and choir.<sup>102</sup> The factors governing this characteristic are succinctly described by Niklaus Pevsner in the Devon volume of *The Buildings of England*:

“The main architectural design of the cathedral remained unaltered from its conception c.1276 to the death of Grandison in 1369 – five active bishops later – and the completion of the building.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> For further reading on the foundation and development of the Cathedral Church see: Herbert E Bishop and Edith K Prideaux, "A Reference List of Prints, Etc, Illustrating the Cathedral," in *The Building of the Cathedral Church of St Peter in Exeter* (Exeter: James G Commin, 1922). A Erskine, "The Accounts of the Fabric of Exeter Cathedral 1279 - 1353," *Devon and Cornwall Record Society* xxiv (1981). Nikolaus Pevsner and Bridget Cherry, *The Buildings of England, Devon*, ed. Yale University Press, second ed., vol. Devon, *The Buildings of England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002). pp364-387. For contemporary histories of the building see John Carter, *Some Account of the Cathedral Church of Exeter: Illustrative of the Plans, Elevations and Sections of That Building / [Some Remarks by (Bishop) C Lyttelton, 1754]; Ed ;by Sir H C Englefield and J Windham (1754)*. Freeman, *The Architectural History of Exeter Cathedral*, New ed. / edited with additional matter by Edward Vere Freeman. ed. Exeter: Eland,, 1888.

<sup>101</sup> Walter J Edmonds, *Exeter Cathedral*, 1st ed. (London: Isbister & Co Ltd, 1897). pp9-11

<sup>102</sup> For a full description of the cathedral see - Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Devon*, Second ed., *The Buildings of England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989). pp364-387

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* p372

Pevsner believed that the repetition of decorative devices, specifically in the tiercerons of the vaulting, imbued the cathedral with a sense of richness and luxuriance.

For W R Lethaby too, the visual coherence of the interior rendered the building uniquely beautiful. In his description of the Cathedral he too referred to the unity of design:

*“Its unity has impressed all writers: Izaak says: “Yet is the same so uniformly compacted as if it had been builded by one man, and done in an instant of time” .....And Exeter is worthy – a marvellous thing, the spirit of which will only speak to us through our reverence and wonder. The noble materials in marble pillars and stone vault; the strongly moulded arches; the unbroken vista; the sense of reality, power, serenity, and fairness, make a whole of amazing beauty.”<sup>104</sup>*

Pevsner and others agreed that none of this coherence would have been apparent if it were not for the work of successive ‘Builder-Bishops’ as they had earlier been described<sup>105</sup>.

The present church was built on the site of a Saxon Minster, used by the Lotharingian Bishop Leofric (reg 1050-72) as his cathedral. This was superseded in turn by a great Norman cathedral that Bishop William de Warelwast (reg 1107-37), nephew of William the Conqueror commenced to build in 1114. Only the two flanking towers, some footings and some fragments in the walls now remain, yet the construction of the Norman towers dictated the development of the church in later years, inhibiting any attempt at heightening the body of the Nave and Choir to any great height as in the great Gothic Churches in France.

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<sup>104</sup> Lethaby, "How Exeter Cathedral Was Built." p109

<sup>105</sup> Addleshaw, *The Cathedral Church of Exeter: A Description of Its Fabric and a Brief History of the Episcopal See.* 1899. Addelshaw refers consistently to the 'Builder Bishops' of the Gothic era.



**Figure 11: Interior of Exeter Cathedral: Nave looking East., Exeter Cathedral Archive;**  
[Photographs not catalogued at the time of consultation]

In 1275 a new programme of building commenced, resulting in the decorated structure still evident today. This was concluded under the direction of Bishop Grandisson (reg 1327-69) in the 1340's. Thus the interior of the Cathedral is largely the product of one building campaign, revealed in the harmony of its features as noted by Lethaby and others. The uninterrupted vaulting of the nave combines with the repetition of designs of the window tracery and other decorative devices, which are echoed across the church from North to South along the entirety of the Nave and Choir. A feeling of space and light across the low interior is engendered by a range of design features, including the asymmetrical placing of the Purbeck marble columns. This placement

allows visibility from the aisles to the Nave, rendering the space larger and more airy than otherwise possible and is well described by Lethaby:

“The sun strikes through the great windows, and fills the interior with positive sunlight; the pillars, set diagonally, allow of full sight into the aisles, thus making the whole width effective, and they take the light and shadow in broad spaces; the arches are easily adjusted to the piers, and their many mouldings follow the same diagonal planes as the pillars they rise from. The dainty triforium is an exquisite foil to the large clerestory above and the great arches beneath. The tracery is as beautiful as tracery can be at its best – romantic yet reasonable, strong yet elegant, various yet balanced – and the way in which the quatrefoil balustrade along the window sills allows the light to filter through its intricacies is perfectly lovely. The vault is unbroken for fifteen bays, and each servery is supported by a dozen pairs of stout diverging ribs, without sub-division or caprice of any sort. The lines are multitudinous as the timbers of a half-finished ship, and in the distant vault, the web-fillings appear to be quite hidden by the stout mounded ribs.”<sup>106</sup>

Lethaby’s observations are significant and will be discussed in further detail below in relation to the aesthetics of the eighteenth-century restoration; and in particular, the glazing programme during this period. At the time of writing, Lethaby was in a minority of commentators who drew attention to the skilful manipulation of light in the relatively low nave and choir by the cathedral’s Gothic architects.<sup>107</sup>

Lethaby was, of course, evaluating evidence of the fabric and glazing as it had been completed during the fourteenth century when the original Great East Window, glazed by Master Walter in 1303-4 was torn down and replaced with a window redesigned and glazed by Robert Lyen. (1389 – 1391).<sup>108</sup> This was part of works initiated by Bishop Grandison (1327-69) at the cathedral and completed by Bishop Brantyngham

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<sup>106</sup> Lethaby, "How Exeter Cathedral Was Built." p109

<sup>107</sup> Other writers to comment on the quality of the light entering the interior of the cathedral include Stuart Moore, Moore, "Exeter Cathedral." and Maurice Drake; Drake and Drake, "Two Papers Dealing with the Ancient Stained Glass of Exeter Cathedral and More Especially with the Restoration of the Great East Window."

<sup>108</sup> Brooks and Evans, *The Great East Window of Exeter Cathedral: A Glazing History*. A complete account of the Great East Window is given by Brooks and Evans, along with notes and research on the glazing history of the cathedral as a whole.



(1370-94). Grandison's window tracery and the great western image screen, with its sculptured figures and intricate niche work, completed the late mediaeval work and define the building as it is seen today. At the time that Lethaby was writing, the Great East Window had been restored by Frederick Drake, the Exeter glass-painter and cathedral glazier, between 1884 and 1896. Drake had, with the antiquarian Stuart Moore in particular, formulated a good idea of the entire medieval glazing scheme from the fragmentary remains.<sup>109</sup> This would have looked very different at the outset of the eighteenth-century improvements and Lyttelton oversaw a restoration of medieval glass to the window.<sup>110</sup> [See Figure 12]



**Figure 12: Exeter Cathedral: Great East Window – detail, Photo: Author, 2008**

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<sup>109</sup> For an account of Drake's findings see Drake and Drake, "Two Papers Dealing with the Ancient Stained Glass of Exeter Cathedral and More Especially with the Restoration of the Great East Window." 1879/1909. Chris Brooks and David Evans provide a comprehensive history of the glazing of the East Window in Brooks and Evans, *The Great East Window of Exeter Cathedral: A Glazing History*. 1998

<sup>110</sup> Brooks and Evans, *The Great East Window of Exeter Cathedral: A Glazing History*. 1998

Fragments of medieval glazing surviving in the upper traceries of the nave and clerestory windows, along with the newly discovered remains of an entire medieval window in the Minstrel's Gallery provided Drake and Moore with the evidence they needed to make their assumptions.<sup>111</sup> This suggests that a good quantity of decorative medieval glass survived the iconoclastic actions of the reformation although little or none of the figural work was left intact. It would appear that this was not necessarily the case when Dean Lyttelton instigated repairs to the cathedral's glass early during his time at the cathedral. Further details of this work is detailed below and suggests that a considerable amount of figural and decorative medieval glass had survived into the eighteenth century, although little of it was in a good state of repair and the figural work bore signs of iconoclastic action.

The Reformation had a serious impact on the cathedral fabric and furnishings that is not immediately evident today, with many of the items being stripped from the cathedral and destroyed. An inventory of the cathedral prepared in 1506, gives some idea of the richness of the cathedral fittings and the lavishness of its ritual at the end of the Middle Ages, but within fifty years of the compilation of this list, almost all of the items had gone. Thus, by the middle years of the sixteenth century, the cathedral had been stripped of the majority of its adornment, rendering the interior more suited to religious observance that elevated the aural above visual understanding of the assimilation of the scriptures.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> This window, depicting four headless saints set on blue backgrounds is now placed in the Clerestory opposite the Bishop's throne.

<sup>112</sup> It is now generally accepted that for medieval worshippers, the lavish decorations and highly coloured glass simulated the transcendence from the corporeal to the spiritual world. For this aspect of gothic worship and role of church decoration see Michael Camille, *Gothic Art* (London: Everyman, 1996). David Evans further explores the correlation of science, vision, stained glass and transcendence in his Unpublished Doctoral Thesis; David Evans, "Medieval Optics and Stained Glass" (Unpublished Doctoral

Although there were brief periods of quiet and even re-embellishment, for much of the period of the Commonwealth, the cathedral church and the Chapter House came under the authority of the Exeter City Chamber and were subject to civic governance.

In 1657, following a major reorganization of the city parishes, the cathedral was divided in half by a wall built on the line of the pulpitum. One half, called West St Peter's was used by the Independents, the other half; called East St Peter's was used by the Presbyterians. The cloisters, Lady Chapel and Chapter House were turned over to secular functions. However, this is not how Deans Lyttelton and Milles found the church in the eighteenth century. On the restoration of the monarchy, the majority of the measures of the previous century were reversed with some £1300 being spent by 1661. Over the winter months of 1660/1661 the dividing wall was demolished, the seats and galleries (erected during the division) were removed and damage to the fabric repaired. New fabrics and hangings for the east end were ordered and the bishop's throne, described as being in a poor state, was painted to resemble marble. The paint was chipped and faded by the time that Deans Lyttelton and Milles assumed office and they gave orders for it to be painted a uniform brown. Further work continued on a patch and mend basis with essential repairs being attended to; financial constraints prohibiting further embellishment.

Alterations made during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had been all but stripped away when Lyttelton and Milles came to Exeter. Lyttelton and Milles therefore first observed the building largely stripped of any decorative distraction. The impact of the architectural detail would have been stronger and their ensuing improvements should be evaluated with this in mind.

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Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1979). For a discussion about light and colour see John Gage, *Colour and Meaning* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003). Especially pp88-104

## Deans Lyttelton and Milles

It is evident that from the early years of the eighteenth century some importance was attached to the upkeep of the fabric, as in 1707 a surveyor of the works post was initiated, and in 1747, when Jeremiah Milles arrived into the Chapter to take up office as precentor, the cathedral was in a decent state of repair, if not restored to its former mediaeval glory. The arrival of Milles in 1747, and his friend and fellow Antiquary, Charles Lyttelton who was elected as Dean the following year, heralded a new phase in the evolution of the Cathedral.

Both men were active members of the Society of Antiquaries in London, Milles being elected Fellow in 1741 and Lyttelton in 1746. Both later became Presidents of the Society, Lyttelton from 1756 to 1768 and Milles from 1769 to 1784. Their antiquarian interests influenced the way in which they viewed the building under their care and impacted considerably on the way they approached their obligations as guardians of the fabric and fittings. Their restorative measures, described more fully below, whilst rendering the church clean, beautified and fit for modern worship, were completed with an acute awareness of the historic legacy of the building that was based not only on documentary evidence and 'hearsay history' but also on a minute and painstaking visual analysis of the fabric.<sup>113</sup> Ambitious and eager for progression in the pursuit of their antiquarian interests and ecclesiastic careers, both men seized the opportunities presented by the cathedral and its see.

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<sup>113</sup> Smiles, "Data, Documentation and Display in Eighteenth Century Investigations of Exeter Cathedral." *Art History* 25, no. 4 (2002): pp500-19.

The author suggests that the work of Deans Lyttelton and Milles at Exeter represents a milestone in the development of antiquarian research, Charles Lyttelton in particular, adding close visual analysis of architectural features to augment documentary evidence.

## Charles Lyttelton (1714–1768)

Charles Lyttelton came from a privileged background and had been educated at Eton College, where he was a member of Horace Walpole's 'triumvirate', and later at Oxford. He was called to the bar in 1738, but in 1740 he gave up law for the 'less strenuous' demands of the church.<sup>114</sup> Lyttelton, the son of Sir Thomas Lyttelton, the fourth baronet, was ambitious for preferment in the Church of England and in 1747 influence secured him appointment as chaplain in ordinary to King George II, and subsequently as Dean of Exeter in 1748. He finally secured a bishopric in 1762 when he was appointed to Carlisle. Lyttelton found Exeter remote from London, but accomplished a great deal in the few months a year that he was there. Within three years of arrival at Exeter he had used his power as Dean to advance an ambitious programme of enquiry, restoration and improvements. He was the first person to recognize the importance of the cathedral muniments and spent much time in retrieving them from neglect, dirt and dust and in cataloguing and securing them in a dedicated muniments room. Indeed, he expended considerable effort in this task and wrote to Jeremiah Milles in 1751 on completion of the mission saying:

“When you have leisure to compare my catalogue of ye muniments with ye muniments themselves, you will judge how laborious a piece of work I have had upon my Hands.”<sup>115</sup>

In 1754, Lyttelton wrote a pioneering history of the cathedral: *Some Account of the Cathedral Church of Exeter*.<sup>116</sup> This history of the fabric, published posthumously in 1797,

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<sup>114</sup> Peter Thomas, W, *Jeremiah Milles (1714-1784); Antiquary and Dean of Exeter* [Website] (Oxford University Press, 2008 [cited 6th May 2009]); available from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18752>.

<sup>115</sup> Charles Lyttelton, "Letter to Jeremiah Milles," in *British Library* (London: 1751). cited in Smiles, "Data, Documentation and Display in Eighteenth Century Investigations of Exeter Cathedral." p508, note 28

represented a departure from previous accounts, which, as Sam Smiles points out, had been based largely on conjecture and local tradition.<sup>117</sup>

“Lyttelton’s involvement with the work of restoration gave him the chance to examine the fabric in considerable detail, as his workmen made alterations to it; his ordering of the archives provided him with the means to examine all the medieval accounts of its construction that had survived. In the light of Lyttelton’s contribution to medievalist research, his access to both sorts of information is crucial. The combination of complementary methods of inquiry, empirical and archival, marks the essay he wrote in 1754... .... He begins by outlining the historiography of the cathedral, from Hooker to Stukeley, to challenge in particular the assumption that the Lady Chapel is a Saxon structure.”<sup>118</sup>

The records that Lyttelton retrieved, catalogued, conserved and documented traced the Cathedral’s affairs from the 1270s to the 1340s and from 1380 to the present time and are considered to be the most complete set of fabric records and accounts extant in any cathedral in England.<sup>119</sup> There was little documentary evidence about the construction of the Lady Chapel. Here, Lyttelton resorted to minute visual analysis of architectural detail to assist in his formulation of the history and development of this part of the Cathedral. As Rosemary Sweet has pointed out, this departure from established processes of historic enquiry was momentous and would have a long-lasting impact on the development of the discipline of architectural history. Antiquaries such as Charles Lyttelton played a pivotal role in establishing the systematic study of architectural history, and in their re-evaluation of the Gothic Style of architecture, contributing to the development of a historicist approach to the

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<sup>116</sup> Charles Lyttelton, *Some Account of the Cathedral Church of Exeter* (London: Society of Antiquaries, 1797).

<sup>117</sup> Smiles, "Data, Documentation and Display in Eighteenth Century Investigations of Exeter Cathedral." p508

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Lyttelton, *Some Account of the Cathedral Church of Exeter*. See also, Erskine, "The Accounts of the Fabric of Exeter Cathedral 1279 - 1353." for a review of the accounts and fabric rolls.

past.<sup>120</sup> For Lethaby, Scott and others writing during the latter half of the nineteenth-century there was no question that the history of buildings should be formulated from visual and documentary evidence, so it is all the more important, as Sam Smiles acknowledges, to realise the significance of Lyttelton's as well as Dean Milles' use of visual analysis as a determinant in the restitution of the history of the fabric.

“Crucially, the argument used to refute [this] tradition (that the Lady Chapel was a Saxon structure) is not documentary but visual. ...The construction of the Lady Chapel is not ...secured with recourse to archival evidence. Although Lyttelton would use documentary evidence in his essay when he could, here he had only his experience of the stylistic development of Gothic architecture to guide him.”<sup>121</sup>

Lyttelton was a painstaking and methodical researcher as Dean Milles, his successor at Exeter acknowledged. As President of the Society of Antiquaries, Dean Milles gave recognition to the contribution of his friend to the antiquarian endeavour, describing his friend's retentive memory, affable temper and his enthusiasm for the collection and dissemination of knowledge about items of antiquity.

### **Jeremiah Milles (1714-1784)**

Jeremiah Milles (1714-1784) came from a less exalted background, but had inherited a good fortune and had married well. Milles was born at Highclere in Hampshire and was one of a family of twelve. His uncle, Thomas Milles, who was Bishop of Waterford and Lismore took his nephew under his wing, paying for his education at Eton College and then at Corpus Christi College Oxford. Under this patronage, Milles was ordained Deacon in 1734 and between 1735 and 1745 served as treasurer at Lismore and

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<sup>120</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. P.xvi

<sup>121</sup> Smiles, "Data, Documentation and Display in Eighteenth Century Investigations of Exeter Cathedral."p508

precentor at Waterford, where notably, considering his later interventions at Exeter, he contributed financially and intellectually to its adornment.

Milles came to Exeter as a man of considerable wealth. Not only did his uncle make him his heir, but in addition, his prospects were enhanced considerably under the patronage of John Potter, Archbishop of Canterbury, whose daughter he married in May 1745. He is chiefly remembered for his antiquarian interests and with Lyttelton undertook exploratory archaeological researches at Exeter, excavating graves in the chancel and investigating the structure of the fabric. From 1753, he sourced and compiled information on Devon history, collating data gleaned from many manuscripts discovered throughout the diocese and even sending out questionnaires to the incumbents in parishes throughout the See. He was energetic in his role as President of the Society of Antiquaries where he extended its social as well as learned activity. With Richard Gough (1735-1809),<sup>122</sup> he was largely responsible for founding its journal *Archaeologia* and whilst under his presidency the convivial side of the Society also flourished when he founded the member's Dining Club.

Like Lyttelton, Milles was a prolific writer and extensive collections of his manuscripts survive, including letters, travel writing and a broad range of antiquarian studies, some of which are illustrated.<sup>123</sup> He and Lyttelton were united in the quest to unravel the history of the church under their care, each of them approaching the enquiry and ensuing restoration of the fabric with a shared enthusiasm that was marked by the

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<sup>122</sup> Richard Gough (1735-1809), antiquary, was born in London, received a private education, and was admitted to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, in July 1752, but left in 1756 without taking a degree. In 1767 he became FSA and from 1771-97 was Director of the Society of Antiquaries.

<sup>123</sup> For further information about Milles' life and antiquarian interests see Peter Thomas, Thomas, *Jeremiah Milles (1714-1784); Antiquary and Dean of Exeter* ([cited]. [Website]. Oxford University Press, 2008 [cited 6th May 2009]. Available from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18752>. See also A Erskine and V Hope, *Exeter Cathedral* (Exeter: Dean and Chapter, Exeter Cathedral, 1990); Smiles, "Data, Documentation and Display in Eighteenth Century Investigations of Exeter Cathedral.",



individual traits of their characters. Lyttelton, methodical and painstaking in his ordering of the historic records and innovative in his visual analysis of architectural style, instigated a programme of essential and historically perceptive repairs to the fabric and renewal to its liturgical fittings. Milles, outgoing, ambitious on his own account as well as for his church and generous of spirit, continued to breathe new life to the core of the cathedral space, overseeing the completion of the programme of embellishment and improvement to the interior of the cathedral church.

### **William Peckitt of York (1731-1795)**



**Figure 13: William Peckitt of York, Self Portrait, Enamelled glass, York City Art Gallery**

The Great West Window was Milles' project from the start. It is clear from his description of the window, published in 1767 that Milles had been at pains to secure the services of the finest glass painter in the country:

“This window is the sole work of that ingenious artist Mr William Peckitt of York, who has brought the complicated art of staining glass with the richest plain colours, and of painting a variety of colours on the same glass to very great perfection, and has given curious specimens of his performances in the Cathedrals of York and Lincoln, in New College and

Oriel College at Oxford, and in the seats of many of the nobility and gentry of this kingdom.”<sup>124</sup>

By the time of this commission, the artist was at the height of his career and, as advertised by Dean Milles in the circular, had completed prestigious commissions for influential ecclesiastic and private clients throughout the British Isles and as far as France, executing heraldic emblems, picture glass and repair work to ancient glass windows with equal dexterity.<sup>125</sup>

The commission at Exeter demanded a designer/craftsman of great skill, who had a comprehensive understanding of mediaeval practice and who was accustomed to producing new work that would be in harmony with ancient glass in an ecclesiastic setting. There is evidence to suggest that the great cathedrals had continued to employ glaziers to effect repairs to ancient windows on a patch and mend basis who could tackle the repairs to the medieval glass. Indeed, the cathedral’s own records reveal the extent of repair work had already been accomplished by the time of Peckitt’s engagement. Equally, there were a number of craftsmen producing heraldic and coloured picture glass that was mainly executed in enamels.<sup>126</sup> However, amongst the handful of glaziers practicing at this time, as J T Brighton has observed, Peckitt was alone in having the skills, vision and experience required.

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<sup>124</sup> Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 47669/1-3, "Printed Circular Describing the Work on the West Window," in *Archive* (Exeter: Undated). This Circular was drawn up by Dean Milles to help solicit subscriptions to complete the window.

<sup>125</sup> For comprehensive accounts of William Peckitt and his commissions see: Knowles, "Glass Painters of York. William Peckitt."; Knowles, "William Peckitt, Glass Painter."; Knowles, "William Peckitt, Glass Painter."; Brighton, "The Enamel Glass-Painters of York: 1585 - 1795 (in Three Volumes)"; Brighton, "William Peckitt (1731-95) and the Quest for Colour in 18th-Century Glass."; Brighton and Sprakes, "Medieval and Georgian Stained Glass in Oxford and Yorkshire: The Work of Thomas of Oxford (1385-1427) & William Peckitt of York (1731-95) in New College Chapel, York Minster and St James High Melton."; Brighton, "William Peckitt's Commission Book 1751-1795." For discussions of the artist’s work see: Baylis, "Glass-Painting in Britain C1760-1840: A Revolution in Taste"; Baylis, "the Most Intractable of Saxon Uncouthness': Eighteenth-Century Painted Glass in Ely Cathedral and the Removal of the Choir."

<sup>126</sup> Unknown, "Glass Painters, 1750-1850," *Journal of Stained Glass* VOL XIII, no. 1 (1959-1960). Unknown, "Glass Painters 1750-1850 (Part II)," *Journal of Stained Glass* XIII, no. 2 (1960-1961).

“[Peckitt] ...was nearer to sources of true gothic art, especially the art of painted glass, than any of his rivals. He lived in York and for most of his working life was engaged in the restoration of the Minster’s mediaeval windows.”<sup>127</sup>

Since the outset of his career, Peckitt had worked at York where from the age of just twenty to his death, he was employed at the Minster restoring the ancient glass and installing new glass at the request of the Very Reverend John Fountayne, DD (1714-1802), who was Dean of York from 1747 to 1802.<sup>128</sup> Fountayne was the artist’s greatest and most enduring patron and employed him throughout his working life. If the resulting familiarity with ancient glass ensured Peckitt’s credibility amongst those patrons with what Brighton describes as “a taste for gothic”,<sup>129</sup> Fountayne’s enduring patronage served the artist well in securing further work. As J T Brighton points out:

“Quite apart from helping to save the Minster’s stained glass treasures, Peckitt acquired some understanding of medieval work and his achievements are still to be seen. In his day the Minster acted as a great public gallery exhibiting his skill, and helped to bring him commissions from all over Britain and especially for other cathedrals.”<sup>130</sup>

Whilst Peckitt’s work at York was chiefly concerned with restoring the medieval windows, using a mixture of ancient glass as well as his own painted inserts to restore the lights in their original setting, at the Church of St Martin’s in Stamford, Peckitt was

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<sup>127</sup> Brighton, "The Enamel Glass-Painters of York: 1585 - 1795 (in Three Volumes)". p274

<sup>128</sup> For accounts of the stained glass at York, including the work of Peckitt see: Sarah Brown, *York Minster: An Architectural History C1220 - 1500* (Swindon: English Heritage, 1982). Sarah Brown, *Stained Glass at York Minster*, In association with the Dean and Chapter of York Minster ed. (London: Scala, 1999). Sarah Brown, 'Our Magnificent Fabrick'; *York Minster: An Architectural History C 1220-1500* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2003).

<sup>129</sup> Brighton, "The Enamel Glass-Painters of York: 1585 - 1795 (in Three Volumes)". p274

<sup>130</sup> Brighton and Sprakes, "Medieval and Georgian Stained Glass in Oxford and Yorkshire: The Work of Thomas of Oxford (1385-1427) & William Peckitt of York (1731-95) in New College Chapel, York Minster and St James High Melton." p383

commissioned in 1759 to re-set a substantial collection of medieval glass in entirely new designs.<sup>131</sup> On this occasion, he cut up and arranged fragments of figural and decorative glass collected by the Marquis of Exeter from Tattershall, Snape and Warwickshire and set them into geometric shapes and designs which were themselves set into plain glass in a manner that was very similar to the glazing work in the nave and clerestory at Exeter executed by Fletcher, the cathedral glazier, under the guidance of Deans Lyttelton and Milles.<sup>132</sup> Brownlow Cecil, 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Exeter, was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and a collector of stained and painted glass, and unlike Walpole at Strawberry Hill, wanted his collection to be re-instated in a religious setting. This was Peckitt's first and largest design incorporating mediaeval work in new designs of his own making and has been generally regarded as aesthetically successful.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> William Peckitt, "Commission Book," in *York City Art Gallery* (York), Unknown, "Glass Painters, 1750-1850," *Journal of Stained Glass* XIII, no. 3 (1961-1962). Commission No. 55. March 1759

<sup>132</sup> See Chapter 3, below for an account of this glazing.

<sup>133</sup> A pamphlet on the stained glass throughout the building, published by the Church, offers a history and description of Peckitt's commission by Exeter.



**Figure 14: William Peckitt, *East Window, St Martin Stamford, 1767, Photo: Author, 2008***

The commission at Stamford reveals Peckitt's intellectual as well as artistic flair and practical ability. The arrangement of the mediaeval fragments was at once innovative and intelligent. As at Exeter, the requirement was to produce an overall effect of the finished windows that would fuse ancient and modern within the historic surroundings. This commission proved Peckitt's ability to respond to the dual demands of patron and surroundings. It also established him as a practitioner who had an astute intellectual as well practical grasp of the medium with which he worked.

Whilst work completed at Stamford and York proved Peckitt's ability to restore and re-mount mediaeval glass, the Great West Window at Exeter was to be filled with entirely new glazing. In 1761, Horace Walpole commissioned Peckitt to set some of his collection of medieval glass in the windows at Strawberry Hill, and consequently, in 1762 and 1772 to produce armorials of his own design to complete the decoration of Walpole's villa.<sup>134</sup> The work done at Strawberry Hill was of paramount importance in furthering the artist's career and contributed significantly to his success as

“...anyone of importance who aspired to design or build in the Gothick taste had visited the house and marvelled at its contents.”<sup>135</sup>

There is no doubt that Walpole's patronage served well to advance the career of the artist. It also helped to establish Peckitt as a master craftsman and innovator. By the time of his employment at Exeter, Peckitt had completed major commissions for ecclesiastic patrons at Lincoln, Stamford and at York, but perhaps his most significant commission in this context was the work he completed at New College Oxford where in 1765 Peckitt had been asked by the College to put up glass of an entirely new design in the great West Window of the antechapel at New College. As at Exeter, there was no question about the glass painter to undertake the task.

This window is significant in the light of the commission at Exeter which followed. At Oxford, Peckitt was required to produce glass to fill the seven light window divided into fourteen apertures by a transom, with tracery lights above. The only description of this window survives in Peckitt's own commission book:

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<sup>134</sup>Harriet Peckitt and William Peckitt, "Commission Book," in *York City Art Gallery* (York), Nos. 77, 83, 184 and 189. These are also listed in: Brighton, "William Peckitt's Commission Book 1751-1795.", Peckitt and Peckitt, "Commission Book."

<sup>135</sup> Brighton, "The Enamel Glass-Painters of York: 1585 - 1795 (in Three Volumes)". p257

“Sep(br) For the Society of New College Oxford. A great West Window measuring about 600 sqr feet erected in the Anti-Chapel. Consisting of the figures of Our Saviour, Virgin Mary and the 12 Apostles in Nitches with Pinnacle Tops and Pedistals to each 12 feet high; the upper part consisting of a Glory of Variegated rays of different colours with Cherubins, Angels, etc.”<sup>136</sup>

Although this window was subsequently taken down it combined elements of work completed for ecclesiastic patrons elsewhere. The one difference here, at Oxford, was that details in the robes and decorations of the glass echoed some of the decorative devices of the original medieval window, the remains of which had been taken down at the request of the College Wardens. It has been argued that Peckitt had based the greater part of his designs on those of the original glass executed by Thomas of Oxford which he had sketched during a visit to the College.<sup>137</sup> Although the designs were not always to the liking of the Fellows of New College, as Brighton and Sprakes point out:

“Peckitt died unrivalled in his day as a restorer of medieval glass and as an artist who understood medieval art. He was called upon to deal with medieval glass and medieval buildings.”<sup>138</sup>

By the time of his commission at Exeter, Peckitt was at the height of his career and it is worth repeating here, that he brought considerable prestige to the cathedral and his patrons at Exeter. With a proven ability to respond sensitively to the demands of antique surroundings with innovation and flair, there could be no question of choice of

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<sup>136</sup> Peckitt and Peckitt, "Commission Book." York City Gallery. No 118, September 1765. "For the Society of new College Oxford, A Great West Window measuring 600 sqr feet."

<sup>137</sup> Brighton and Sprakes, "Medieval and Georgian Stained Glass in Oxford and Yorkshire: The Work of Thomas of Oxford (1385-1427) & William Peckitt of York (1731-95) in New College Chapel, York Minster and St James High Melton." p399

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. p390

artist for the Great West Window. Peckitt was indeed the only artist capable at the time.

Evidence suggests that Peckitt was a man of considerable ambition, drive and intelligence. William Peckitt was born in 1731 in Hushwaite in the North Riding of Yorkshire, the son of a fellmonger who, on moving to York went on to establish himself as a successful glove maker. None of Peckitt's siblings took up their father's trade, but there is indication that the members of the Peckitt family were inquisitive, inventive, and eager for social and professional advancement.<sup>139</sup> His father was evidently ambitious and had taught himself the skills of glove-making on his move to York. His grandfather and great-grandfather had also been fell-mongers, although he and his younger brother claimed genteel origins from the family of Picote in Yorkshire.<sup>140</sup> Peckitt prepared a pedigree for his family and a design for the family attributes is lodged amongst the pages of Peckitt's annotated copy of John Guillim's *A Display of Heraldrie*, published in London in 1611 and currently held in York City Archives.<sup>141</sup>

It is evident from this book that Peckitt made a detailed study of the subject. A deep understanding of the science of heraldry was an essential tool of the trade if he was to meet the wishes of his clients. The margins of the Peckitt's 'Guillim' are annotated by the artist with scholarly notes about heraldic insignia and attributes, as well as with designs of his own making. Many of the plates are hand coloured, presumably by Peckitt himself.

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<sup>139</sup> Brighton, "The Enamel Glass-Painters of York: 1585 - 1795 (in Three Volumes)". p238

<sup>140</sup> L H Cust and JT rev Brighton, *William Peckitt* (Oxford University Press, 2004 [cited 5 May 2009]); available from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/21746>.

<sup>141</sup> John Guillim, *A Display of Heraldrie* (London: William Hall, 1661). Held by York City Archives. Accessed at York City Library, August 2004.



As he claimed on more than one occasion, Peckitt was an inquisitive and accomplished experimenter who made extensive trials with techniques of glass painting, staining, enamelling and manufacture, even exploring techniques of fusing of two colours of glass in an attempt to recover the lost art of flashing and etching ruby glass in particular.<sup>142</sup> This is evidenced in writing in two ways. During his lifetime he secured a patent for flashed coloured glass and on his death, his wife (unsuccessfully) sought a publisher for a treatise or recipe book that he had prepared on the making and staining of coloured glass.<sup>143</sup> This treatise is extensive, with recipes for coloured glass, flux, stain, enamels and flashing. Selected recipes have been examined and repeated in recent years with special attention being paid to the ruby glass. By all accounts, Peckitt came near to the original colours.<sup>144</sup>

As to Peckitt's claim to being self-taught, it has been suggested that he must have been apprenticed to the glass-painter in York, Henry Gyles<sup>145</sup>, but was according to his own and his daughter's later assertions entirely self-reliant.<sup>146</sup> By the age of 21 he had sufficient confidence to advertise his craft in the York press:

“William Peckitt, son of William Peckitt the noted glove-maker next door to the Sandhill in the Colliergate, York, Thinks it proper to advertise all gentlemen, clergymen, and others that by many experiments he has found out the art of painting or staining of glass in all kinds of colours and all sorts of figures, as scripture pieces for church windows, arms in heraldry, etc. in the neatest and liveliest manner, specimens of which may be seen at the

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<sup>142</sup> These experiments were repeated in 1986 by R G Newton. The results are recorded in Brighton and Newton, "Unravelling an 18th Century Mystery - Peckitt's Red Glasses." pp213-20

<sup>143</sup> William Peckitt, "The Principals of Introduction into That Rare by Fine and Elegant Art of Painting and Staining of Glass, Mr Wm Peckitt," in *York City Art Gallery* (York: Undated).

<sup>144</sup> RG Newton, JT Brighton, and JR Taylor, "An Interpretation of Peckitt's 18th Century Treatise on Making Glasses and the Stains for Them," *Glass Technology* 30, no. 1 (1989). pp33-38

<sup>145</sup> J A Knowles, "William Peckitt, Glass Painter," *The Yorkshire Architectural and York Archaeological Society Annual Report* (1953).p103

<sup>146</sup> Harriet Peckitt, "Letter in Reply to the Rev Dallaway," *Gentleman's Magazine* (1816). p392

house [aforesaid]. He likewise repairs old broken painted windows in gentlemen's houses and will wait on any person in town or country that desires it."<sup>147</sup>

Just two years later, he presented the arms and other emblems of the City of York to the Lord Mayor and alderman and was subsequently awarded Freedom to the City of York for the encouraging of Arts and Sciences.

By the 1760s he had become the pre-eminent glass painter in England and in 1761 submitted works to the Free Society of Artists. He was not hesitant in advertising his talents and requested the exhibition of his works in a letter written to the Society:

“...through the help of Divine Goodness and by great expence study and experiments for the space of nine years I have fundamentally found out improved and brought to perfection in all its parts the Art of Painting and staining in Glass Scripture History, Coats of Arms, and other Designs of the like kind, so much as could reasonably be expected to anyone in that space of time, And being yet under Thirty Years of Age, performances in which if thought agreeable I will make bold to show to the Society when thought proper, and if I am thought worthy from thence some mark of encouragement to compensate for the said indefatigable endeavours, I will endeavour to promote the same as much as layeth in me.”<sup>148</sup>

The request was granted and Peckitt submitted panels including a window measuring four and a half feet wide and eight feet tall, depicting ‘*Our Saviour's Crowning with Thorns*’. Thomas Gray saw it as did Thomas Wharton and later in the year Peckitt secured commissions from Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill, and in the next year for Wharton, Richard Bateman, Thomas Barrett and Lord Dacre.<sup>149</sup> As well as

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<sup>147</sup> William Peckitt, "William Peckitt of York," *York Courant*, 14th July 1752.

<sup>148</sup> William Peckitt, "Letter to the Free Society of Artists," in *Library of the Royal Society of Arts* (London: 1760). Cited in Brighton and Sprakes, "Medieval and Georgian Stained Glass in Oxford and Yorkshire: The Work of Thomas of Oxford (1385-1427) & William Peckitt of York (1731-95) in New College Chapel, York Minster and St James High Melton." pp382

<sup>149</sup> Peckitt and Peckitt, "Commission Book." Nos 51 and 53, nos 39,49 and 75. Peckitt's commission book contains details of all of the artist's commissions in chronological order. This is not an account book, rather a listing of all the commissions, with the dates, description and costs. It is generally thought that this was compiled by his daughter, Harriet, who helped him in his work.

mounting some of Walpole's collection of antique glass, Peckitt was asked to execute further new glass to add to the display of armorials at the Villa.

Although the Great West Window at Exeter was one of his largest and most important commissions, he had earlier been commissioned to execute a large window for the East window at Lincoln Minster.<sup>150</sup> This window, in which heraldry and mosaic were combined to create an overall design, was short-lived. The remains are now scattered in the upper lancets of the north-east transept and the Consistory Court.

In 1765, he was commissioned to execute glass for the West Window of the ante-chapel at New College Oxford, and in 1767, completed a commission for the East window of the chapel of Oriel College Oxford.<sup>151</sup> The window at Oriel College depicted '*Christ's Presentation in the Temple*' where pot metals were used for the drapes and dull red enamel for the sleeves of one of the principal figures. The window at New College, introduced above, measured approximately 600 sq ft and consisted of the figures of the Saviour, the Virgin Mary and the twelve Apostles, all set in pinnacled niches and placed on pedestals. Each figure was 12ft high, the main design being surmounted by the Glory with cherubs and angels. The window was not successful and was taken down after only twelve years to be replaced with glass depicting '*The Nativity*' and '*The Virtues*' painted by Thomas Jervais to designs by Sir Joshua Reynolds. However, in 1788 the college decided to place figures from Peckitt's West Window in the easternmost windows of the north side of the choir where fourteen of the sixteen lights received them. These figures, and other glass in the chapel give an indication of

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<sup>150</sup> Peckitt and Peckitt, "Commission Book." No. 89

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. Nos 118 and 130

Peckitt's ability as a draughtsman (which was found lacking) and as a craftsman and will be discussed in further detail below.<sup>152</sup>

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**Figure 15: has been removed due to copyright restrictions**

Commissions secured after the completion of the Exeter window include a series of armorials for the Foundling Hospital in London, and in 1771 large figures of saints and

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<sup>152</sup> For a description of the commission and a brief evaluation of the glass see Brighton, "William Peckitt's Commission Book 1751-1795." No 118 and 197. For a description of all the glass at New College and a brief commentary on the Peckitt glass, see Christopher Woodforde, *The Stained Glass of New College, Oxford* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1951). And Christopher Woodforde, "The Painted Glass in New College Chapel and Hall, Oxford," *Archaeological Journal* ix (1883).p 54 For a discussion of the glass see Brighton and Sprakes, "Medieval and Georgian Stained Glass in Oxford and Yorkshire: The Work of Thomas of Oxford (1385-1427) & William Peckitt of York (1731-95) in New College Chapel, York Minster and St James High Melton."pp380-415 Published as a bound offprint in the same year.

prophets for windows in the north side of the chapel at New College Oxford to cartoons by Biagio Rebecca.

In 1775 he installed a large picture window based on cartoons by the academician Giovanni Battista Cipriani of the *The Muse Presenting Sir Isaac Newton and Sir Francis Bacon to George III* in the Wren Library at Trinity College, Cambridge.



Figure 16: William Peckitt, *The Muse Presenting Sir Isaac Newton and Sir Francis Bacon to George III*, Wren Library, Cambridge.

William Peckitt's success was marked by hard work and a determination to excel. In his final years he published a religious tract entitled *The Wonderful Love of God to Men: or Heaven Opened in Earth*.<sup>153</sup> This has previously been dismissed as being of no consequence,<sup>154</sup> yet it reveals Peckitt to be a highly intelligent and rational thinker whose working practice was founded on extensive philosophical and practical enquiry. It is clear that Peckitt saw himself as a natural scientist and a pious man. This aspect of Peckitt's life has been examined by Sarah Lowengard who suggests that Peckitt believed in a universal order and world system based on six different kinds of elements, each with specific forms and properties. Each of the elements, when combined with others, is directed into a new shape by the divine power.

“Peckitt used his understanding of the sciences, primarily a combination of chemistry and natural history, to explain the universe, with Bible quotations provided for corroboration.”<sup>155</sup>

His explanation of the light and the position of colours within that system “cast some typical ideas of his time ...into a new vocabulary..”<sup>156</sup> Lowengard deduces that:

“The juxtaposition of Peckitt's practical manuscript [treatise] with his published philosophy makes it clear that his working life was not confined by the walls of his workshop. The order he created there was part of a larger order in the universe. For Peckitt, the mechanics of work and the mechanics of life [were] the same, both being a microcosm of the combination of religious belief with physics and chemistry.”

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<sup>153</sup> William Peckitt, *The Wonderful Love of God to Men, or Heaven Opened in Earth* (York and London: Lund, Baldwin, Robson & Cadell, 1794).

<sup>154</sup> Knowles, "William Peckitt, Glass-Painter." p102;

<sup>155</sup> Lowengard, *The Creation of Color in Eighteenth-Century Europe* ([cited). “Peckitt's Universal Order.”

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*([cited]).

Ultimately then, the tract reconciles Peckitt's science with the Holy Trinity and the Designer God, and places him as an astute thinker, a practical man of science, and a philosopher.

The Dean and Chapter at Exeter certainly found him to be astute as a business man when he was quick to charge extra for alterations they desired to be made to the cathedral glass. Peckitt charged extra for cartoons purchased in 1765 of saints and apostles secured from the sale of the estate of William Price, the London glass-painter. These were used to draw up the figures for the West Window. Price had not drawn these cartoons himself; they had been prepared in 1721 from designs by Sir James Thornhill (1675-1734) for the North Rose of Westminster Abbey. Peckitt further charged for alterations to the size of the figures, which he commissioned himself, and for extra mosaic work that had been demanded subsequent to the first agreement.<sup>157</sup>

It has been suggested that Peckitt secured the commission at Exeter on the recommendation of Walpole, or as Trevor Brighton suggests, on the recommendation of the Bishop of Exeter, Frederick Keppel (reg 1762-1777), who had married Walpole's niece,<sup>158</sup> and who commissioned Peckitt to paint armorials for the windows of the Palace in 1766.<sup>159</sup>

However, it is equally likely that his work was discussed freely at the Society of Antiquaries in London. Whilst Walpole knew Peckitt's expertise as a painter of armorial work and in relation to the setting of medieval panels in plain glass at Strawberry Hill, work at Stamford marked Peckitt out as having artistic flair as well as

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<sup>157</sup> Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4664: State of Mr Peckitt's Account for the West Window (Interim Account)," in *Exeter Cathedral Archive* (Exeter: nd).

<sup>158</sup> Brighton and Sprakes, "Medieval and Georgian Stained Glass in Oxford and Yorkshire: The Work of Thomas of Oxford (1385-1427) & William Peckitt of York (1731-95) in New College Chapel, York Minster and St James High Melton." p.393

<sup>159</sup> Peckitt, "Commission Book." No 125, October 13th 1766



an antiquarian understanding of medieval glass. His work at the great cathedrals at Lincoln and at York Minster amongst others, which included new picture glass as well as armorial work to be set in antique mullions and traceries, would also have been known to Deans Lyttelton and Milles. The figural glass at New College Oxford, prepared for the West Window of the ante-chapel, further commended the artist for his ability to combine antique and modern design elements in an overall scheme, although on this occasion, his draughtsmanship was found wanting as Dean Milles stated in a letter written to Henry Bathurst at New College in 1771.

“Everyone who has seen the two windows executed for your college and this Cathedral has lamented the want of a skilful draughtsman in the former of those works, and nothing has done Mr Peckitt so much credit as the Cartoons from which [he] painted our figures.”<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> William Peckitt, "Ms. Cd 54, the Dean of Exeter to Henry Bathurst," in *New College Oxford Muniments* (Oxford: 1771).



**Figure 17: William Peckitt, Figure of St Peter, 1768. York Minster, Photo: the author 2009**

The Great West Window at Exeter combined elements introduced above – and was always intended to complement the surviving medieval glass at Exeter in its iconography and style. It would appear from Milles' letter, quoted above, that he believed the Exeter window to be superior in its execution and design to those at New College, and in his appraisal of the window on its completion described it as superior to any in the land.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4669/1, Description of the Great West Window, Fully Completed."

The final window presented a new hagiography in its inclusion of the Apostles and Saints duly set amongst armorial work mounted in plain glass and bordered with geometric mosaic surrounds. It further presented the viewer with a more secular iconography, in the inclusion of the more 'curious' designs and motifs that united church and state in a manner that was essentially modern.

## **The Window**

The first mention of William Peckitt in relation to the commissioning of new glass for the West window at Exeter is as early as October 1764 when the Chapter ordered that £50 be paid to the receiver:

“ .....and to remain in his hands and that he answer herewith the Draughts which Mr. Dean shall make upon him who by comment of the Chapter hath agreed with Mr Pecket to fill the six central lights in the west window of the Cathedral with painted glass” .<sup>162</sup>

At this time it would appear that the requirement was to fill only the central lights of the window, but as funds became available, the Chapter was asked to support the plan to reglaze the window in its entirety. In November 1764 they approved a plan for Peckitt to fill the upper parts of the window with coloured glass and in November 1765, the Chapter Acts record that the Dean had forwarded Peckitt an advance to enable him to travel to Exeter to survey the window:

“...the sum of Five Guineas be paid to Mr Pecket towards his expenses in coming hither to view and measure the Western Window of the Cathedral.”<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral and Chapter Acts, "Chapter Act Book 1763-1790," in *Exeter Cathedral, Dean and Chapter* (Exeter: 1763-1790). October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1764, pp151 and 226

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.* November 9<sup>th</sup> 1765, p 339

The Articles of Agreement for the entire window were finally drawn up on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1765.<sup>164</sup> In addition to listing the required elements of the window, the agreement stipulates the time of completion, the costs of transportation of glass from York, and the agreement that Peckitt would travel to Exeter to stay for a time “not exceeding one Month” in assisting to put up the glass:

“The sd. Wm. Peckitt agrees to paint Stain and execute the West Window of the Cathedral Church in the best Manner on strong glafs set in good Leads, well soder’d and Cemented and ready to put into the Stone Work at the price & in the manner following”<sup>165</sup>

The Dean and Chapter met a significant proportion of the final cost, their final expenditure of £193, 19s and 6d covering the outlay for the figures, decorative devices, the royal arms and the insignia of the Deans Lyttelton and Milles. The arms of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Exeter and twenty-five noblemen, barons, baronets and members of parliament were paid for by subscription collected by Dean Milles. Further expenses accrued by the artist in the transport of glass to the cathedral were also covered:

“All the [above] Arms are to be painted at the expence of the Dean of the Chapter – and [the following] Coats are to be pd for by the Dean of Exeter who has collected Subscriptions for them. ....And in case any additional Quarterings be made to the Coats of Baronets of Members the said Wm. Peckitt is to receive half a Guinea Additional for every Coat impaled & a Guinea Extraordinary for every Shield Quartered...”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> These detailed Articles survive in the Cathedral Archives. Exeter Cathedral, "Milles:Peckitt Agreement."

<sup>165</sup> Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 7663 & 7664, Articles of Agreement between Rev D Milles, Dean of Exeter and William Peckitt, Glass Painter and Stainer of the City of York," in *Exeter Cathedral Peckitt Papers* (Exeter: 1765).

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

The project was finished within the time set out in the terms of Agreement and on its completion Dean Milles published a description of the window together with a list of the subscribers and a description of their arms.<sup>167</sup> This was published in limited numbers, a copy being given to each of the subscribers, the Mayor of Exeter and members of the Corporation. The description was accompanied by an illustration of the completed window prepared by Richard Coffin and included a key to the main colours used in the design, together with a notation by which the various arms and decorative devices could be identified.

## **Materials**

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, the surviving physical remnants of eighteenth-century glazing proffer limited indication to the original appearance of the window. Any meaningful interpretation of the form and impact of the finished design has therefore to be compiled from a variety of written and comparative sources; including contemporary and later accounts of the glass and examples from the artist's oeuvre as a whole. The remains do however, provide a key to the techniques and materials used and confirm Peckitt's considerable skill as a glass painter and craftsman.

William Peckitt was known to have used a combination of enamels, paint, silver stain and pot metals in his working practice, and although little, if any of the remaining glass at Exeter is currently identified as pot metal it can be surmised that he utilised a characteristic range of materials and technique in this commission. The Chapter Acts

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<sup>167</sup> A number of copies of this printed description and illustration survive. The copies consulted in this instance reside in the Archives of Exeter Cathedral: Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4669/2, Description of the Window, Fully Completed." Engraved by Richard Coffin and Printed by R Trewman, Exeter.

record payments for quantities of 'coloured glass' that remained unused on the completion of the window as well as for painted designs.

"They ordered that the two Crates of Plain Coloured Glass containing 430 square feet be purchased from Mr Peckitt for Thirty Pounds....."<sup>168</sup>

They also record an order for "plain coloured" glass for 'fretwork' or 'lattice work' at the base of the window, and although there is no direct evidence, it is probable that pot-metals were used throughout the window, especially for the robes of the figures as they were for large figural work surviving at New College Oxford,<sup>169</sup> York Minster and St Anne's, [for figures formerly at St Margaret's], Manchester.

"For nine pieces of Mosaic to finish the Bottom of the Window, measuring in all 14  $\frac{3}{4}$  Sqre Feet at 8s per foot square: £5, 18s, 0p"<sup>170</sup>

Prints of the West Window show the mosaic in detail and further reveal that the outermost lights were also bordered in plain glass. The decorations were characterised by ornate lattice-work in-filled with fleurons in a style similar to the panel now at York City Art Gallery.

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<sup>168</sup> Exeter Cathedral and Acts, "Chapter Act Book 1763-1790." Nov 28 1767, p353

<sup>169</sup> Sarah Brown, *Important Window at New College Oxford Conserved* (2009 [cited 22 May 2010]); available from [http://www.vidimus.org/archive/issue\\_31\\_2009/issue\\_31\\_2009-04.html](http://www.vidimus.org/archive/issue_31_2009/issue_31_2009-04.html).

<sup>170</sup> Exeter Cathedral and Acts, "Chapter Act Book 1763-1790." Sep 12 1767, p345



**Figure 18: William Peckitt, Painted glass panel, York City Art Gallery**



**Figure 19: William Peckitt, Painted glass panel, York City Art Gallery. [detail]: Photos: Author, 2005**

Although Peckitt's use of pot metal glass for the larger elements of the window at Exeter is notional, the fragments of Peckitt's armorial and decorative work incorporated into the lights of the Cloister Walk in 1922 provide more concrete

evidence of the physical makeup of the decorative elements.<sup>171</sup> The major part of these remnants are set into two four-light and one three-light window openings on the south side of the building. The coats of arms currently presented in these windows are isolated from their supports, crests and other accoutrements and only hint at the elaborate design of the originals.<sup>172</sup> The colours are indistinct and a significant proportion of the enamels are either faded or have peeled away entirely. Much of the painted detail is faint and in some instances hardly legible. Fragments mounted in the traceries of all the windows of the Cloister have fared better. These show far less signs of deterioration and evidence the artist's painterly style.

Conservation work completed in 2011 to the arms of the Duke of Bedford, located in an opening casement in the centre-most of the three windows, has enabled more detailed appraisal of the quality and condition of the eighteenth-century glass.<sup>173</sup> The Peckitt glass at Exeter is thin and shows signs of repeated repair both with lead comes and resin glue. Unlike the glass used for some of the figures at New College Oxford, where it is reportedly thin and of a uniform thickness, it would appear that the majority of the glass used for the decorative work at Exeter is uneven in depth, suggesting that crown glass was used for the smaller areas of glazing.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> See Appendix I: The Cloister windows.

<sup>172</sup> Detailed representations of these survive in two illustrative prints of the window prepared by R Coffin and R Pranker in 1767 and 1769 respectively.

<sup>173</sup> Andrew Johnson, Personal Communication, February 2011.

<sup>174</sup> Brown, *Important Window at New College Oxford Conserved* ([cited]). The Peckitt glass is described as being characterised by 'its relative thinness and regularity'





**Figure 20: William Peckitt, c1766 Arms of the Duke of Bedford. Exeter Cathedral Cloisters. C2. Photo: Author 2011**

Etching is apparent in the plain glass of the armorial taken down for repair suggesting that it was enamelled at one time, although there is no residue of the enamel itself. However, traces of blue enamel have been identified in other parts of the surviving glass. The emblem of the lion, described as red in printed descriptions, has been identified as being executed in a deep yellow-orange stain. There is evidence of the use of paint and enamel in the three scallop shells, which were formerly described as argent on sable. Some parts of the panel were beyond repair and have been replaced with new glass.



**Figure 21: William Peckitt, Arms of the Duke of Bedford, 1766, detail showing vestiges of etching for enamelling and silver stain. Exeter Cathedral Cloisters. C2. Photo: author 2011**

In their entirety, the armorials witness the artist's use of a wide range of technique. In the majority of the designs, white glass has been decorated with glass paint, yellow stain and coloured vitreous enamels and plain coloured glass was used to good effect in a few of the arms, notably in the arms of Archbishop Secker and Bishop Grandison.



**Figure 22: William Peckitt, Arms of Archbishop Secker, 1766. Exeter Cathedral Cloisters. C1. Photo: author 2011**



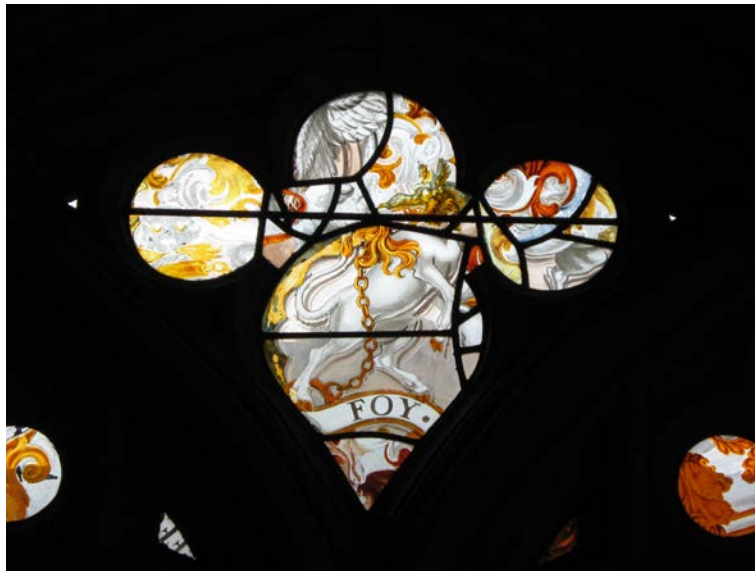
**Figure 23: William Peckitt, Arms of Bishop Grandison, 1766. Exeter Cathedral Cloisters. C1. Photo: author 2011**

However, these larger items have suffered considerable deterioration and do not give an indication of the Peckitt's detailed painting in all parts of the window.

The upper traceries of the window openings on the north and west facing windows of the Cloister walk are filled with fragments of the more decorative elements of the original window and bear witness to the craftsmanship of the artist.



**Figure 24: William Peckitt. Detail of remnants of glass from the Great West Window, 1766. now located in Exeter Cathedral Cloisters. C5. Photo: author 2011**



**Figure 25: William Peckitt. Detail of remnants of glass from the Great West Window, 1766. now located in Exeter Cathedral Cloisters. C7. Photo: author 2011**



**Figure 26: William Peckitt. Detail of remnants of glass from the Great West Window, 1766. now located in Exeter Cathedral Cloisters. C7. Photo: author 2011**

## Content and Colours

The finished design presented the spectator with a vast collection of heraldic devices, decorative motifs and figural work. It brought wide acclaim from all who saw it and was publicised in September 1767 and again in 1772 when detailed illustrated descriptions were printed and circulated by the Dean and Chapter.<sup>175</sup> The great rose, divided into two concentric circles with two small circular lights on the lower extremities was filled with heraldry and other decorative devices whilst the seven central perpendicular lights of the window were filled with figures of Saints and Evangelists with the patron saint of the cathedral, St Peter, in the centre. The outer lights and the bases of these figural lights were filled with the arms of donors to the window, each armorial enclosed within borders of decorative plain glass surrounded by mosaic work with floral and scroll embellishments. Richard Coffin's notation of the colours used in the window, included in the print prepared by him in 1772, suggests that the trellis-work, the borders of the outer lights and the borders of a proportion of the arms of the lesser nobility were executed in primary greens, blues and reds, the latter being repeated symmetrically across the width of the window and across the two outer lights. The borders of armorial devices in the upper traceries were executed in yellow or gold, giving a golden cast to these upper lights.<sup>176</sup> Pale blues predominated in the backgrounds at the centre of the great rose, whilst reds and scarlet were used in the extremities to emphasise the border of the rose. The colours

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<sup>175</sup> The iconography of the window is discussed below in Chapter 3. A list of coats of arms and illustration of the window is included in Appendix 2

<sup>176</sup> Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral and Richard Coffin, "The Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral," in *Collection of Prints of the Great West Window by William Peckitt, c1766* (Exeter: 1767-1772). Ms 143

deployed in the upper traceries were repeated across the entire width and depth of the great rose and its surrounds in a balanced and symmetrical design.



**Figure 27: R Coffin, Print of the Great West Window (1766) by William Peckitt with notation of the colours used. Exeter Cathedral Dean and Chapter. Ms 143**

In contrast to the smaller areas of colour in the upper traceries, the robes of the saints presented large blocks of colour. The colours used for the principal lights are described in detail in printed descriptions of the window, and several copies of hand-coloured prints survive to give an idea of the principal design. However, the colours used in a number of these tinted prints do not conform with those described, making it difficult to ascertain the exact appearance of the window from this one set of

sources. Colouration in other hand-tinted prints of the window and notably one that is now located at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter, are closer to the printed description. This depiction, a hand-coloured copy of a print engraved by Robert Pranker in 1767, can therefore be deemed the more accurate of the two.<sup>177</sup>

Coffin's pamphlet described the figures in detail, giving the colour of the under and outer garments worn by each Saint. The figures flanking the central figure of St Peter were presented in robes of rich blues, green, yellow, orange, red and purples, drawing attention to the central figure, who was robed in striking colours, with an undergarment of rich pure red and a loose outer garment of a violet colour. In contrast with the upper and outer areas of the window, the colours were not repeated symmetrically across the design, drawing attention to individual Saints. However, the deportment and attributes of the figures provided visual echoes across the design, suggesting that it was the detail, rather than the appearance of these elements of the design that demanded most attention. As Robert Pranker's print shows, the attributes and staffs held by the outermost figures of Saints Paul on the southern extremity, and St Andrew at the north, mirrored, but did not copy each other. Each held a staff in their outermost hand suggesting their entry into the pictorial space whilst also representing a border. The diagonals drawn by the staff of St Paul at the south edge and the cross of St Andrew on the north drew the eye back out of the composition, furthering the illusion of movement into and out of the pictorial space. The figures of St Matthew to the south of St Peter, and St Mark at the north, were presented obliquely with their leading shoulders nearest the centre light. The direction of their gaze further drew the viewer's attention in towards the central

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<sup>177</sup> Robert Pranker, *The Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral*, circa 1766. Engraving, hand coloured and mounted. Royal Albert Memorial Museum.

light, where St Peter was presented with the foremost foot almost stepping out and off the pedestal suggesting a readiness to step out of the pictorial plane and into the spectator space.



**Figure 28: Robert Pranker, The Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral, Engraving. 1767. Detail. Exeter Cathedral Library.**

In this way, the finished window, although citing its medieval surroundings, particularly in Peckitt's choice of colour and in its overall effect, was equally aligned to fine art practice. As at St Martin's Stamford, Peckitt used colour to present a balanced and symmetrical design. Contrasting hues, especially the blues and gold of the silver stain used in the upper rose, were used for dynamic visual effect, most notably at the end of the day when the sun was at its lowest. Peckitt, as corroborated in his publication, *The Wonderful Love of God to Men: or Heaven Opened in Earth*,<sup>178</sup> was acutely aware of the effects of light and colour and used his knowledge and skill to add a further dimension to Milles' designs for the Great West Window.

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<sup>178</sup> Peckitt, *The Wonderful Love of God to Men, or Heaven Opened in Earth*.



## Design and effect

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**Figure 29 has been removed due to copyright restrictions**

Deterioration of the surviving enamel has endowed the reds, browns and orange with an orange/brown cast that gives the impression that this colour predominated in the original window, although more detailed examination has revealed that blue

predominated in the upper lights; an effect in which warm earth colours used in the lower lights gave way to a celestial blue.

When combined with the physical evidence of the remaining glass in the Cloisters, and compared with surviving glass executed by Peckitt from the same cartoons elsewhere, Coffin and Pranker's prints give a strong indication of the original impact of the design, suggesting that Lethaby was correct in his observation that the artist drew inspiration from the coloration of the surviving medieval glass in the cathedral, combining these elements in a design wherein a predomination of golden hues at the base and in the side lights of the window gave way to light and dark blues in the great rose and apex. The contrast of the golden borders with the blue backgrounds of the decorative elements of the traceries would have framed them with shimmering golden halos at the end of the day drawing attention to the upper lights. In contrast, the bold blocking of colours in the robes of the figures, who were themselves framed within pinnacled recesses picked out with gold and silver embellishment would have drawn attention to the lower lights during the day. The few surviving photographs of the window in situ indicate that the window allowed bright light to penetrate the glass, lighting up the nave and aisles of the Cathedral Church.

### **The Completed Window**

Immediately on its completion, Dean Milles ordered the description and illustration of the window that gave the details of its iconography as well as a list of the subscribers to the scheme. He wrote of the design and finished effect of the window:

“The present work is not inferior to any which have been executed in this Kingdom, and is not more universally than justly admired for the variety of the design, the beauty and richness of the colours, the elegance of the

figures, and the propriety of the ornaments; and was intended .....to please the eye with its awful splendour...."<sup>179</sup>

This statement hints at the strength of Lyttelton and Milles' ambitions and confirms Peckitt's skill and flair as an artist.

The restoration at Exeter was not done in isolation. By the 1760s large scale restoration programmes in the Cathedrals of Norwich and Ely were also in hand, with provision being made specifically for the installation of costly new painted windows.

William Price the Younger (d 1765) had painted windows in Westminster Abbey, Winchester and New College Oxford. The Reverend William Cole, writing on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1762 reported :

Price has painted a large chapel window 'The Resurrection' for him [Bishop Benson at Gloucester] for him that is scarce inferior for colours, and is a much better picture than any of the old glass. Horace Walpole employed him extensively at Strawberry Hill".<sup>180</sup>

Large picture windows such as the one described in glowing terms by William Cole, and by association the restorations themselves, were, as Sarah Baylis points out to attract widespread public admiration.<sup>181</sup> The Exeter window was no exception and was, as Dean Milles proclaimed, generally well received and elicited favourable responses from travellers touring the county and more discerning visitors alike with reports of the Window being ornamented with beautiful painted glass. Two years after the completion of the window, the Reverend William Cole wrote to Horace Walpole mentioning the window and reported the reaction of Walpole's acquaintance,

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<sup>179</sup> Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4665, Description of the Window, Fully Completed," in *Exeter Cathedral Archives* (Exeter: 1767).

<sup>180</sup>W S Lewis and A Dale Wallace, eds., *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, 47 vols., vol. I (London and New Haven: Oxford University Press, Yale University Press, 1937).. p103

<sup>181</sup> Baylis, "Glass-Painting in Britain C1760-1840: A Revolution in Taste".p47

Edward Betham (1709-1783) to the new glass. Quoting Betham's letter to him dated 6<sup>th</sup> June 1768, Cole wrote:

"I forget whether you have ever been at Exeter. The Cathedral there is greatly ornamented: the choir all paved and the stalls too all new, and the organ. The west window within these two years has been decorated with painted glass by Mr Pecket of York, so as to be greatly admired. ....It makes a very grand appearance and by connoisseurs the whole is thought to be well executed: the arms more especially.

"Dr Milles, the Dean, a brother of yours of the Antiquary Society, has had this work much at heart, and been very zealous in the execution of it every way."<sup>182</sup>

Reception of the window, as Cole reports via Betham, was universally favourable and was essentially a realisation of Dean Milles' ambition for the Cathedral Church.

Together with his friend and fellow Antiquary, Charles Lyttelton, he had rendered the Church at Exeter fit to rival any in the land.

Whereas Dean Lyttelton sought to put the history of the Cathedral in order, and to make sound the fabric of the historic building according to the strictest of antiquarian principles, Dean Milles' restoration was of an entirely different character. Milles, who proved himself to be acutely aware of the cultural as well as the historic significance of the building, used the fabric as a blank canvas upon which he could re-paint history whilst forging a new identity for Cathedral Church both as an historic monument and as a religious institution. Peckitt's window was the penultimate and grandest gesture in this restoration, and within its decorative devices, contained the entire narrative of Milles' aspirations for the fabric and the future of the Church.

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<sup>182</sup> Lewis and Wallace, eds., *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*. p146-147



## Chapter Three: Continuity and Change

### A ‘...Sordid story’, of ‘...Capitular Zeal’

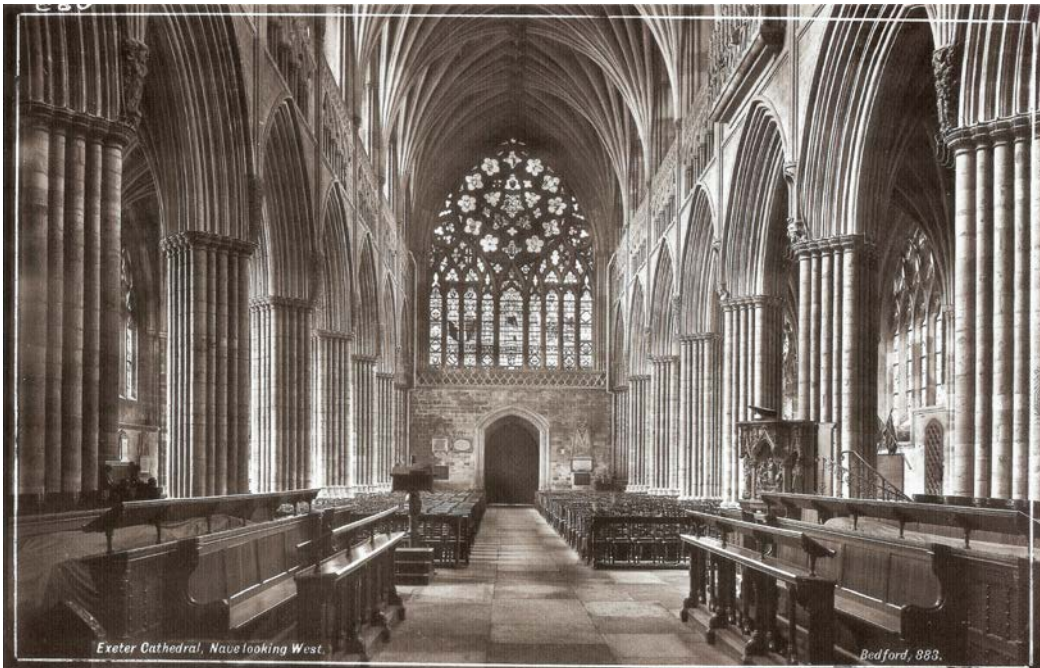
William Peckitt’s Great West Window at Exeter Cathedral fell from favour barely one hundred years after its completion. As seen in Chapter One, the proposal to remove it in 1903 had elicited a protracted set of arguments between interested parties that eventually spilled out into the public arena of *The Times* newspaper and beyond. In her dissertation on eighteenth-century glass painting,<sup>183</sup> Sarah Baylis points out that these arguments give a sharp reminder of the strength of criticism directed against eighteenth-century glass painting that persists to this day, and further submits that these arguments are indicative of a change in taste that is itself rooted within the ideology of the Victorian Gothic Revival.<sup>184</sup> Scrutiny of the exchanges between Dean and Chapter and those who felt impassioned enough to comment on their proposal to remove the Peckitt window, shows that the antipathy towards the window had much more than the form and appearance of the Georgian glass at their heart. The opinions expressed sprang as much from prevailing attitudes towards the art and culture of the eighteenth century as they did with the form of the glass itself. Equally, they sprung from an aesthetic that was informed by the mediaevalising ideals of the Victorian Gothic Revival which focussed as much on the practice and essence of the mediaeval craft as it did on the visual impact of the ancient windows. From this springboard, the aesthetics of the eighteenth century window were denounced as ‘a potent for evil’; the didactic scheme of the window was described as ‘inappropriate’ at best and ‘sordid’ at

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<sup>183</sup> Baylis, "Glass-Painting in Britain C1760-1840: A Revolution in Taste".

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. pp 11-17; See also, Chapter 4, pp187-233 for a discussion of stained glass and the Gothic Revival from 1760-1840

worst, and as a whole, it was damned as an ‘unsightly’ blemish on the face of an otherwise perfect building.<sup>185</sup>



**Figure 30: Exeter Cathedral, Nave looking west, c1901. Showing William Peckitt's Great West Window.** Birmingham City Library, The Bedford Archive, Bedford 883

The principal criticisms levelled at Peckitt's glass at this time posit three major defects; namely, the quality and condition of the window, the appearance of the glass and the iconographical content. Firstly, the condition and actual physical makeup of the glass was found to be lacking. The glass was thin, the colours that survived were deemed to be brash, some of the enamels were faded and peeling and the window traceries were in need of repair. Secondly, there was a perceived failure of the window, in the execution of the subject matter and the details of its design to harmonise with its Gothic surroundings. The brightness, classicised figures and the preponderance of large pieces of flamboyant armorial work were found to jar within the mediaeval

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<sup>185</sup> The argument broke out as Scott's restoration to the presbytery, ambulatory and choir were completed and attention was being turned to the nave and western front of the cathedral.

framework of the restored Cathedral. Thirdly, the iconography was pronounced to be 'inappropriate'.<sup>186</sup> This referred in part to the representations of the apostles and evangelist saints that were ranged across the principal tier of the window and in part to the nature of the armorials, which represented persons from the secular rather than ecclesiastic community.<sup>187</sup> The combination of these defects caused the morals of the maker, patrons and the donors alike to be called into question. This is evidenced in the strength of language used in the arguments and is succinctly summed up in the words of Marlborough and other members of the Chapter who accused Peckitt of avarice and the subscribers, whose arms were included in the overall design, of self-aggrandisement.<sup>188</sup> The statement made by A R Buckland in his letter to *The Times* published on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1903 encapsulates the strength of feeling and is worth re-quoting here:

“[The glass] is, of course, modern glass and has no sort of relationship to the early glass... The history of its erection is a particularly sordid story, but let that pass... [And] as for the coats of arms which tell so curious a story of capitular zeal and other people's vanity, they spread over the window in a very unedifying fashion.”<sup>189</sup>

There is an element of truth in Buckland's proclamation. The Peckitt window presented a complex set of references to the history of the Cathedral and to the aesthetics of the improvements, but by 1903 the window was the last surviving feature

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<sup>186</sup> Anon, "Report of the Committee." pp 182-84. The report mentions the inappropriateness of the evangelical figures, the faded colours and the lack of visual synchronicity between east and west.

<sup>187</sup> The new window by Burlison and Grylls depicted the founders and selected former bishops of the Cathedral Church in the principal lights, surmounting their armorial shields. The upper wheel contained images of angels, cherubim and seraphim along with other heavenly devices.

<sup>188</sup> See correspondence in *The Times* Newspaper, January to March 1903 including: Marlborough and Bodley, "Exeter Cathedral; to the Editor of the Times." p8. Marlborough, "Exeter Cathedral: To the Editor of the Times." p7. Gamble, "Exeter Cathedral." p5. etc.

<sup>189</sup> Buckland, "Exeter Cathedral." p8, Col D



of the eighteenth-century improvements left in situ, where it stood in isolation from the elements that originally defined it. In the exposition that follows, a complex set of iconographies are revealed that would not have been apparent at the time of the arguments.

This chapter reviews the eighteenth-century restoration programme as a whole with a view to establishing the visual and intellectual contexts within which Peckitt's window was completed. New glass for the west window had been ordered towards the end of this lengthy programme during which time the glazing of the entire cathedral had received attention, including the historic Great East Window. It will be shown that the old and new glass can be seen to resonate both in their iconography and physical appearance. Furthermore, subtle design elements were added to the historic and new glazing that deliberately referenced the restoration work as a whole.

### **Continuity and Change - History Displayed**

Deans Lyttelton and Milles had spared no effort in planning and executing their programme of harmonising improvements. As the scheme neared completion, the cathedral stood new-clad with new black and white stone paving to the quire and presbytery, new Gothick choir-stalls, with newly designed Gothick wainscoting harmonising old with new. The choir screen was new-cleaned and the seventeenth-century organ repaired and embellished with gold leaf and new painted. By 1765 the cathedral was rendered fit for modern times and equal to any cathedral in the land. It was only then that Dean Milles' attention turned to the West Window.

Repair and renewal of the glass had been integral to the restoration from the very outset with Joseph Tucker and Arthur Bradley and then Richard Fletcher employed from 1751 onwards; to make good, repair and beautify the windows of the nave and

choir. Whilst this is suggestive of a simple programme of patch and mend, in marked contrast to the Victorian glazing, the eighteenth-century glazing programme at Exeter was carefully considered as a whole from the outset, and was an integral element of the grand scheme.

In contrast, the Victorian and Edwardian glazing had been installed as and when funds became available, the majority of the windows serving as memorials to the donor or the donor's family. A minority of the windows were financed via subscription, one of these being the Women's Window in the North Transept. The Temple Memorial Window was paid for entirely by subscription. The glazing was installed over a period of seventy years, window by window, a factor that itself prohibited any attempt at achieving a universal scheme.

When viewed as a whole, the eighteenth-century glazing programme reveals the strength of Deans Lyttelton and Milles' purpose. Roughly speaking, the work was completed in two phases. The first was initiated by Dean Lyttelton and concentrated on remedial work and repair to the Cathedral glass, notably to the East Window. After completion of this window, attention was turned to the interior. The second phase was completed under the supervision of Dean Jeremiah Milles and was concerned more with renewal. This culminated with the re-glazing of the West Window.

Given the repairs made to the East Window which utilised medieval glass retrieved from the cathedral and Chapter House, it might be supposed that the scrupulous historical scholarship of Deans Lyttelton and Milles would prompt them to preserve any mediaeval glazing of the West Window. It is unlikely in the light of findings made by Chris Brooks and David Evans in relation to the mediaeval glazing of the East

Window that much of the ancient glass in its counterpart had survived.<sup>191</sup> However, the glazing programme was crucial to the iteration of the restoration as a whole and for this reason alone it was essential that the glass in the West Window was all new. The finished design presented onlookers with a spectacle wherein the most recent works could be discovered and identified as being integral with the history and status of the Cathedral Church. For this reason, the Cathedral glazing and refurbishment should be viewed as a whole if the full impact of this articulation is to be understood. It is immediately apparent that the programme of repair and renovation followed a logical course, one dictated by necessity as the ravages of weather, neglect and direct iconoclastic action were remedied. Only on completion of essential repair work was the order given for new. This outline however, and the positing of two distinct periods of restorative activity overseen by successive Deans presents too simplistic a view. When viewed holistically it becomes apparent that very definite intellectual and aesthetic considerations informed each stage of the glazing programme. This approach ultimately reveals a conscious desire on the part of both Deans to extend the renovation beyond a simple task of repair work.

Dean Lyttelton initiated repairs to the glazing when Arthur Bradley, clerk to the Chapter, was ordered to oversee the taking of glass from the imperfect windows of the Cathedral to '*compleat and repair*' the Great East Window. Coeval with this and the installation of the glass in the West Window, defective and damaged lights throughout the Cathedral Church in the choir and nave, as well as in the clerestory, were repaired with plain glass into which Lyttelton and then Milles had the glaziers insert decorative medallion and geometric shapes filled with fragments of the

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<sup>191</sup> Brooks and Evans, *The Great East Window of Exeter Cathedral: A Glazing History*. See in particular pp38-49 and pp164-165

mediaeval remnants. These shapes mimicked those already evident in the few examples of mediaeval grisaille that had survived. Their impact will be discussed below in relation to the aesthetics of the scheme.



**Figure 31: Sample of Glazing in the Clerestory circa 1903 showing the arrangement of mediaeval fragments in decorative medallions.** Photo: Exeter Cathedral Archive. 1440-1444

The order for repairs to be made to the East Window was given in 1750. In the main part, this work was carried out by a local glazier, Joseph Tucker who reglazed the foot of the central lights across the entire width of the window and the three central lights through its entire height.<sup>192</sup> Chris Brooks and David Evans give an account of work

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid. pp.46-48, p164

Chris Brooks and David Evans give a detailed account of the eighteenth century restoration of the window that helps to form an idea of the eighteenth century glazing scheme. The focus of the enquiry is primarily on the East Window, therefore the impact of the glazing on the appearance of the church in its entirety is not discussed.

undertaken on the East Window at this time, and suggest that the Tuckers were an important family of Exeter glaziers, the senior members being freemen of the city.<sup>193</sup>

By and large, the existing glazing scheme was adhered to in as much as figures of saints and archangels were installed in the central lights to replace disfigured and damaged figural glass. The majority of this and a good proportion of canopy and other architectural details installed during this period were taken from the corresponding window of the Chapter House. Brooks and Evans' research reveals that although a quantity of crown and slab glass was purchased by the Dean and Chapter at this time, no painted glass was purchased.

“The entire programme ... was concerned with the movement and repair of existing painted glass, and Tucker's account clearly shows that a substantial quantity of old glass was removed from various parts of the cathedral, most extensively from the Chapter House.”<sup>194</sup>

Thus the East window was patched and mended with late mediaeval glass from a local atelier, care being taken to blend old with old and like with like. The historical integrity and the aesthetic balance of the whole window were maintained. Some of this work remains to the present day, and despite stylistic differences it can be seen that glass installed by Tucker blended reasonably well with the older glass, itself installed in two phases by Master Walter circa 1301 and Robert Lyen circa 1391.

The second phase of the re-glazing work on the East Window was initiated by Dean Milles in 1765 in the same year that work began on the West Window. This phase saw a continuation of the patch and mend strategy initiated by Lyttelton with mediaeval glass being drawn from stock left in hand by Tucker. Shields and canopies were

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid. p.39

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. p.40

introduced to the figural glass of the principal tier in correspondence to figure work installed in the West Window, and the six outer figures were placed on perspectival check pavements. These overtly referenced the newly installed black and white pavement of the choir. On completion of the patching, a quantity of new coloured glass was purchased from Peckitt. This mainly took the form of plain coloured glass, ready to be painted, decorative border work, mosaic and some diaper. Some of the plain was later painted with fleurons and other geometric and flamboyant designs and incorporated into the window as border-work.<sup>195</sup>



**Figure 32: William Peckitt, Fleuron, 1766, Exeter Cathedral**

Detail of glass taken from the Great West Window and inserted in to Cloister Window C2 in 1920-22 showing an example of decorative devices deployed in Peckitt's original window.

Peckitt had been commissioned to re-glaze the Great West Window with the first agreement to fill the central lights being drawn up between the Dean and Chapter and

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<sup>195</sup> F Drake, "Ancient Stained Glass of Exeter Cathedral, with Sketches and Diagrams," in *Westcountry Studies Library* (Exeter: 1875-1910). F Drake and F M Drake, "Two Papers Dealing with the Ancient Stained Glass of Exeter Cathedral and More Especially with the Restoration of the Great East Window," (Exeter: 1879/1909).

himself as early as 1764.<sup>196</sup> During this time three armorials were prepared for the Cathedral windows that were ultimately installed in the three topmost lights of the East Window tracery. They made specific reference to the foundation and development of the Cathedral to modern times. The largest of these, fitted at the apex of the tracery, alluded to the foundation of the diocese under King Athelstan in a depiction of the fictitious arms of the Kingdom of West Saxony.<sup>197</sup> These were signed, not by Peckitt, but by Robert Scott Godfrey: 'R.S. Godfrey Pinxit 1765'.<sup>198</sup>



**Figure 33: Robert Pranker, Engraving of the Great West Window (detail), c. 1767  
Arms of the Saxon Kings painted by William Peckitt, 1766, Exeter Cathedral Library**

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<sup>196</sup> Exeter Cathedral, "Milles:Peckitt Agreement."

<sup>197</sup> It is likely that these were painted by Robert Scott Godfrey.

<sup>198</sup> Unknown, "Glass Painters, 1750-1850," *Journal of Stained Glass* VOL XIII, no. 1 (1959-1960). pp.326-238. The date is given as 1767 on the authority of Wilfred Drake.



**Figure 34: William Peckitt/ Robert Scott Godfrey, Emblazon - Arms of the Saxon Kings, 1765/6**  
Photo: Author



**Figure 35: R Coffin, Hand Coloured Engraving of the Great West Window (detail), c1772,**  
Exeter Cathedral Archive, 144



It has been suggested by Trevor Brighton and others that Godfrey worked at one time for Peckitt. Godfrey reportedly began his career working under the glass-painter William Price the Younger. Two years after the death of Price in 1765, the artist moved to France to set up in glass painting there.<sup>199</sup> By the middle of the eighteenth century, he is reported as having set up as a 'glass-blower' and painter at Chaumont Castle at the invitation of Jacques-Donatien Le Ray in the Loire Valley, but the commissions never materialised and he died in poverty.<sup>200</sup>

Godfrey's *Arms of the Saxon Kings* was flanked on the south side by the Arms of Bishop Lavington, and on the north by those of Bishop Keppel. It is possible that all three of the armorials were the work of Godfrey, but it is by no means certain. According to Brooks, these three armorials exhibit a technical accomplishment that is not apparent in the corresponding armorial work in the West Window, with the shields showing more traditional techniques than those deployed by Peckitt.<sup>201</sup> As a group, the armorials, placed at the apex of the East Window, signified two distinct phases in the evolution of the Cathedral Church. George Lavington was incumbent between 1747 and 1762 during the first phase of the improvements and Bishop Frederick Keppel, Bishop of Exeter from 1762-1768, was in office during the final stages of the improvements.

The association of Lavington and Keppel's arms with those of the Saxon Kings indicates that the armorials signified much more than individual status. Individually they drew attention to the foundation and contemporary episodes in the development of

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<sup>199</sup> Unknown, "Glass Painters 1750-1850 (Part I)," *Journal of Stained Glass* XIII, no. 2 (1960-1961). p390

<sup>200</sup> *Chaumont Castle* (2010 [cited 18th May 2010]); available from <http://werbeka.com/schloss/frankr/chaume.htm>.

<sup>201</sup> Brooks and Evans, *The Great East Window of Exeter Cathedral: A Glazing History*. p156-157

the Church in which the eighteenth-century programme was awarded equal significance to the foundation of the See. As a group they symbolised the continuous development of the Church from its very foundation to the present day. Finally, from their elevated position at the head of the window, Athelstan and the contemporary bishops stood as guardians of the Cathedral's historic past as represented in the restored lights below them, and as captains of its future as they looked out over the length of the building.

The messages of continuity and change articulated in the East Window mirrored and reinforced concepts posited in its counterpart at the West End of the Nave. The three armorial devices discussed above were repeated from the West Window where a combination of figural and heraldic glass brought the Cathedral Church into the modern era in spectacular manner. This window, described in Chapter Two above, was very much the project of Dean Milles and represented the zenith of the improvement scheme.

### **Continuity and Change – history signified**

When referring the "*propriety of [the window's] ornaments*" in the description and illustration of the finished window, Milles was referring to its glazing as a whole, and this included the figural, decorative and ornamental heraldic work. A R Buckland, quoted at the outset of this chapter, found the heraldry particularly disturbing. Whilst his comments were astute in one respect, his irritation with the abundant use of secular heraldic motifs in the window was based on a set of ideals that did not pertain when the window was first installed.

The aesthetic of the window was not lost on Chancellor Walter J Edmonds, who despite being an impassioned campaigner for the removal of Peckitt's window in 1903,

was able to discern a visual coherence in the design and to acknowledge the skill used in the execution of the armorial work.

“The idea of the window [is] that over and around the seven figures which Peckitt painted on coloured glass a border should run consisting of the coats of arms of the subscribers, the border running up into the great wheel, where, on a foundation of ducal and baronial shields the less impressive coats of baronets should float in the diluted rays of the setting sun”<sup>202</sup>

Ultimately, Edmonds too questioned the appropriateness of a design that was financed, he surmised, via the vanity and greed of its patrons.

At the time of publication of these letters, there was a considerable revival of interest in the use of heraldry as an architectural embellishment in public and private building as well as an unprecedented demand for new grants of arms. Thomas Woodcock and John Martin Robinson précis this as follows:

“The fashion for heraldic decoration was not only an aspect of the Gothic Revival, but also a manifestation of seigniorial pride of the English upper classes after the French Revolution and Waterloo. ....the early nineteenth century in England saw the manufacture of endless Norman pedigrees .....and the indiscriminating enjoyment of all the trappings that went with such sonorous mediaevalisations.”<sup>203</sup>

When Buckland and others commented on the indiscriminate use of heraldry, their analysis was founded within this understanding of its use. At the time of the window’s inception and execution over a century before, heraldic devices were used not only as statements of status and ownership, but also as important decorative devices within the broader context of architectural space. During the latter half of the eighteenth-

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<sup>202</sup> Walter J Edmonds, "Exeter Cathedral," *The Times*, 16 February 1903. p. 7

<sup>203</sup> Thomas Woodcock and John Martin Robinson, *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). P.43 and p49

century, when the window was executed, armorial designs had become 'pictorial', the supporters, crests, badges and mottoes often being executed in an overtly painterly style that illustrated the seat of those represented. Whilst it cannot be denied that the final design of the Peckitt window did in part parade the pecuniary means of its installation, it did in fact have a much broader and more important function. The careful placement of heraldic images could, as they did at Exeter, articulate specific narratives in a manner more allied to history painting than to the decorative arts.

The 'history' of the Cathedral was encoded in the very emblems that later commentators labelled as self-proclamatory indulgences – the insignia and armorial bearings that decorated the lower lights and that bedecked the delicate tracery of the rose window played an important role in the articulation of Lyttelton and Milles' restoration.

Thus the preponderance of heraldry in all parts of the window occurred partly by design and partly as a result of financial expedient. Whereas the Chapter had been willing to support expenditure on the repair and, to some extent, the refurbishment of the cathedral furnishings, they found themselves unwilling or unable to meet the full costs of the new glass and in particular the considerable expenses associated with the commissioning of the new West Window. Consequently, subscriptions were sought from gentry and noble families who either resided in or had substantial lands and holdings within the two peninsular counties. In addition to this, the most influential members of Exeter's civic society were invited to contribute. The majority of the coats

of arms were paid for in this way by subscription, whilst the Dean and Chapter, the Bishop and Dean Milles himself contributed towards the rest.<sup>204</sup>

It was by no means unusual to find a quantity of armorial work in the west windows of lesser churches; a fact that would not have escaped Dean Milles. At the churches of St Neot's and Egloskerry in Cornwall for example, as in other parochial churches in the See, the west window was designated the 'town' window, facing as it did out towards the civil world with an immediately recognisable proclamation of the principal sponsors and guardians of the church. Milles had made an extensive study of the churches within the diocese and had travelled in Gloucestershire and elsewhere as a young man from church to church making records, many of which were later published as papers and pamphlets.<sup>205</sup> As in a number of churches in the diocese, the west window of the Cathedral faced out onto the civil world and stood above the great west doors. Traditionally, this entrance had represented the threshold between the secular and heavenly kingdoms. Those represented in the west window of the cathedral comprised a mixture of ecclesiastic and secular dignitaries wherein the heads of the Church in England were, in the placement of their arms, represented as guardians of both domains.

In addition to this more traditional deployment of heraldry and the associated representation of the collaboration of society outside the ecclesiastic community,

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<sup>204</sup> Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4670/1-15, Letters from Various Persons in Reply to a Request for a Subscription Either to the Part of the Great West Window or to a Coat of Arms in It.," in *Exeter Cathedral Archive* (Exeter: 1767).

Dean and Chapter Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4668, the Dean's Account of His Receipts and Disbursements for the Window, with a List of Subscriptions Received from Various Noblemen for Their Coats of Arms in the Window.," in *Exeter Cathedral Archive* (Exeter: Undated).

<sup>205</sup> Some of Milles' manuscripts were published in *Archaeologia*. Notable amongst the many Devon manuscripts are the '*Parochial Returns*', now in the Bodleian Library, add. Mss 14263-14264, 14266, 15762-15778, 19941-19942, 32123. Devonshire MS, collection and working papers, b107, c6, c8-17, c19, e7-8. Society of Antiquaries, London.

there was a further dimension to Milles' stated intention to render the interior of the Cathedral 'compleat'.

The armorials placed at the head of the East Window, of the fictitious *Arms of the Kingdom of Saxony*, and Bishops Lavington and Keppel echoed across the length of the Choir and Nave and repeated devices placed in the head traceries of the West Window. These repeated designs however, were placed in different positions.

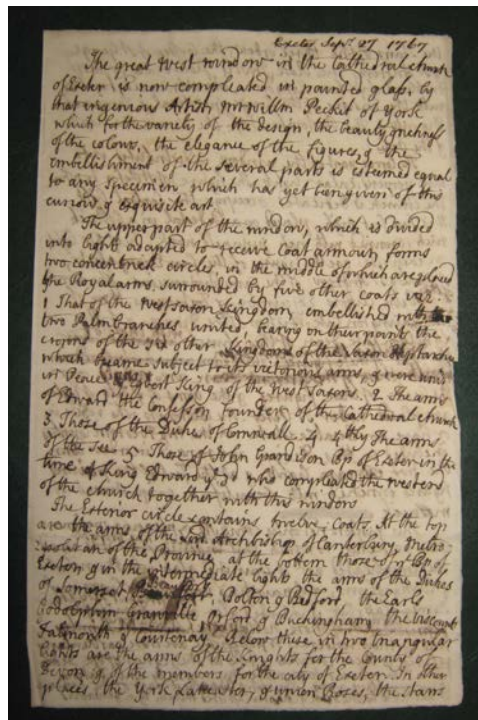
In the modern window, the *Arms of the Archbishop of Canterbury* were placed in the prime position at the apex of the outer tracery, mirroring those of *King Athelstan* in the East Window. They were surmounted only by a small roundel depicting the *Lamb of God*, flanked by *His Glories*. Directly beneath these, contained within the apex tracery light of the inner rose, were the *Arms of the Kingdom of Saxony*, described by Milles as being united in Peace by Egbert, King of the West Saxons.<sup>206</sup>

Edward the Confessor, founder of the Saxon church, and the Prince of Wales as Duke of Cornwall were honoured in the next layer whilst Bishop Grandisson and the *Arms of the See of Exeter* were awarded equal status in the two lower lights of this inner rose. With the possible exception of the Prince of Wales, a hierarchy of the foundation and continuation of the Church was represented within the very heart of the upper tracery, with the Archbishop of Canterbury at the head.

There can be no doubt that these were deliberate articulations. As witnessed in Dean Milles' carefully edited draft of the printed description of the finished window, each part of it was of significance.

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<sup>206</sup> Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4669/1, Description of the Great West Window, Fully Completed."



**Figure 36: Dean Jeremiah Milles, Description of the West Window, September 27, 1767, Exeter Cathedral Archive, Mss 1669/1-2, Bundle of papers relating to Peckitt's Great West Window**

The lights of the outer rose were reserved largely for the arms of those who had contributed most significantly to the window.



**Figure 37: Robert Pranker, The Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral (detail - upper rose), Engraving, undated – c.1767.**  
Exeter Cathedral Archive: 47669/1-3

One exception here is interesting. In the lowest quatrefoil, located in a direct line underneath the arms of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Arms of West Saxony, and just above the figure of St Peter, were the arms of Bishop Keppel, incumbent during the second phase of the improvements. Keppel then, was awarded a higher status to that given him in the East Window and was placed in a central position.

Bishop Keppel has been described as:

“an affable, open-hearted and bountiful prelate, who .....took a special interest in the comforts of his inferior clergy.”<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Unknown, *The Bishops of Exeter* [Web page] (2004 [cited 01 July 2004]); available from [www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk](http://www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk).

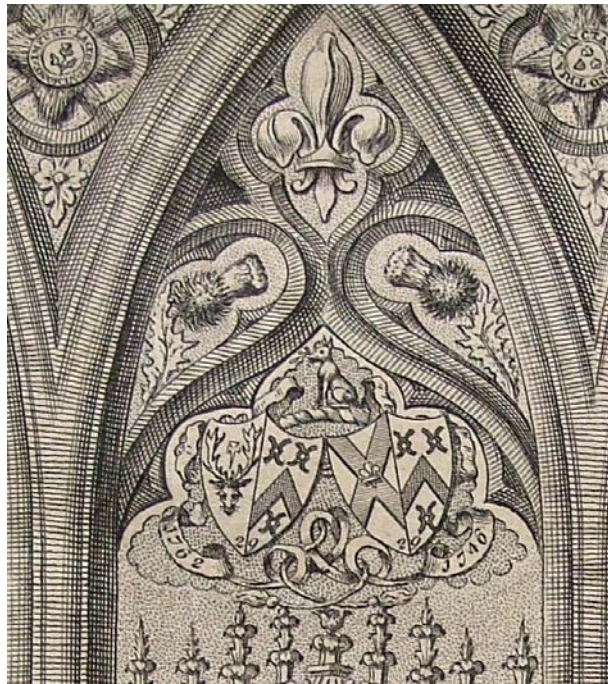


Keppel had spent considerable sums of money on the modernisation of the Bishop's Palace, and was himself a patron of Peckitt. The placement of his arms in prime position above the central light indicates the level of support that he gave his Dean through the second phase of the improvements.



**Figure 38: Robert Pranker, The Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral (detail – arms of 'Hon Dr. Keppel, Bishop of Exeter), Engraving c.1767. Exeter Cathedral Archive: 47669/1-3**

One character in the narrative has so far been omitted from this account. Dean Milles was awarded a double shield, one impaled with the arms of the Chantry, the other impaled with the arms of the Deanery. These were contained within the head of the central light of the principal tier, just above the head of St Peter and in a direct hierarchical line below the prime figures mentioned above. In placing his dual arms directly above the figure of St Peter, to whom the Cathedral was dedicated, Dean Milles sent out a clear indicator of his status in relation to the development of the church and its transformation.



**Figure 39: Figure 7: Figure 6: Robert Pranker, The Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral (detail –dual arms of Dean Milles, the fleur de lis and two thistles), Engraving, undated – c.1767. Exeter Cathedral Archive: 47669/1-3**

As in the East Window, the founders of the church and key figures in its recent development were represented within the gothicised decorative orders as guardians of the Cathedral’s historic past, instruments of its renewal and as overseers of its future. This time they were overseen by the Lamb of God and by the Church in England, as represented by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Dean Milles was presented as a key agent in the process, the shields of the Deanery and the Chantry representing as they do the dual role of the institution as historic physical monument and as an historic yet vibrant religious foundation.

This last inclusion would seem to validate Buckland’s unease about the self-interest of the several patrons and most of all Dean Milles, but in evaluating the heraldry in isolation from other insignia and emblems included in the design, one of the window’s essential messages was overlooked.

The central opening of the great wheel contained the insignia and arms of King George, secular Head of the Church in England and overseer of the realm. He was represented as presiding over a United Kingdom and placed at the centre of representations of the individual states. England and Scotland were represented by the flags of St George and St Andrew in lights SA and NA respectively at the head of the outer perpendicular lights. The decorative devices of the Rose, the Thistle, the Fleur de Lies and the Harp, representing England, Scotland, France and Ireland were awarded equally high status and were repeated across the outer quatrefoils of the inner wheel. The two small outer circular lights that flank the lower extremities of the outer Wheel contained emblems of the White Rose of the House of York, the Red Rose of the House of Lancaster, and the two roses conjoined to represent the union between the two royal houses. With the exception of the two flags, all of these devices were repeated throughout the upper traceries of the window. There is no account of any of these being replicated from the East Window, suggesting that the West Window specifically signified the modern church.

It is clear that the Cathedral was presented as an historic religious foundation adapted to meet the demands of the modern Anglican Church; one that was equipped to operate within a society united across geographical and governing boundaries under the leadership of the King, who was himself represented in the window as the secular head of the Church. It is significant also, that although the King was awarded the central and largest opening in the great wheel, both the *Arms of the Kingdom of Saxony* representing the historic foundation of the Church in England, and the arms of the Archbishop of Canterbury, ecclesiastic head of the church in England, were given the hierarchical positions directly above the King where they were subordinate only to the *Agnus Dei*.

As a direct result of Dean Milles' careful selection of artist and design, decorative and didactic motifs combined to honour and identify the Cathedral's historic past whilst restoring to it a sense of continuity and renewal as both building and institution. The inclusion of armorial work alongside the insignia and emblems of a United Kingdom presented the Church as an institution that was inseparable in its principles with the secular state.

### **Continuity and Change – the figural glass**

The completed Window thus presented the viewer with a curious and colourful blend of decoration in which modern and ancient were presented in harmony and in equal measure. The ancient traceries of Exeter's West Window provided an armature within which the virtuosity, imagination and sensitivity of an artist used to working as both restorer and innovator were successfully exploited. The head tracery lights were spangled with a mixture of elaborate and colourful armorials, which were placed alongside intricate royal, civil and religious insignia. All of these were adapted to the tracery in an innovative manner. However, no attempt was made in these upper lights or elsewhere to subordinate the mediaeval structure to modern demands of a single pictorial design. Instead, even though these forms made only passing aesthetic reference to mediaeval example each light was filled with a self-contained motif.<sup>208</sup>

These did not attempt to honour historic precedent via the device of exact archaeological copy. Rather, Peckitt, who was experienced and adept in the restoration of mediaeval glass as well as the art of painting and staining more modern, even painterly, subjects, brought the inventiveness of his forbears into a more modern

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<sup>208</sup> See the description in Chapter 2 and diagram in Appendix 2 for detail of the insignia and decorative devices.

idiom wherein the canonical values of verisimilitude and the construction of 'histories' prevailed.

Once this is understood, it can be seen that contrary to later attacks on the window, Peckitt, and Milles had paid particular heed to the window's mediaeval surroundings.

Trevor Brighton rightly points out that:

“Peckitt died unrivalled in his day as a restorer of mediaeval glass and an artist who understood mediaeval art. He was called upon to deal with mediaeval glass and mediaeval buildings. Noteworthy among his arrangements of mediaeval glass must be his insertion of the Marquis of Exeter's mediaeval collections into the windows of St Martin's Church in Stamford. Among his great mediaeval works were his east windows in the Minsters of Lincoln and Ripon....”<sup>209</sup>

Peckitt's unique practical understanding of the mediaeval craft was exploited in the principal lights of the window where glass-painting techniques re-discovered by the artist and perfected over a number of years combined with contemporary design to produce a striking exhibit of figural work. The seven main lights were filled with standing full-length gothic-rococo figures of the Evangelists, Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, together with Saints Paul and Andrew, with St Peter at the centre. The central light, slightly wider than the rest, housed the five-foot figure of St Peter, patron saint of the Cathedral. He was clothed, like the other Saints in flowing robes executed in a mixture of enamelled plain glass and painted pot-metal glass, the features and decorative work being executed largely in enamels. All the figures stood upon rococo-gothic pedestals that were surmounted in turn by gothicised niches and topped with elaborate gothicised pinnacles. The cartoons for these undeniably Italianate figures were prepared from drawings by Sir James Thornhill [1675-1734] that had been

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<sup>209</sup> Brighton and Sprakes, "Medieval and Georgian Stained Glass in Oxford and Yorkshire: The Work of Thomas of Oxford (1385-1427) & William Peckitt of York (1731-95) in New College Chapel, York Minster and St James High Melton." p390

purchased specifically for this purpose from a sale of the effects of William Price the Younger shortly after his death in 1765. They had first been put to effective use by Price in the North Rose Window of Westminster Cathedral c.1722.

The cartoons were later utilised by Peckitt at St John's Manchester<sup>210</sup> for figures of Saints John, Peter and James (Jacobus) and give a good idea of Peckitt's skill as a craftsman. These last were later moved to St Mary's Hulme, Manchester where the window was cut down to be reset in the north side, with new mosaic executed in the Peckitt's style. Although not entire, the window gives a unique opportunity to examine Peckitt's dexterity with both glass and paint close to.

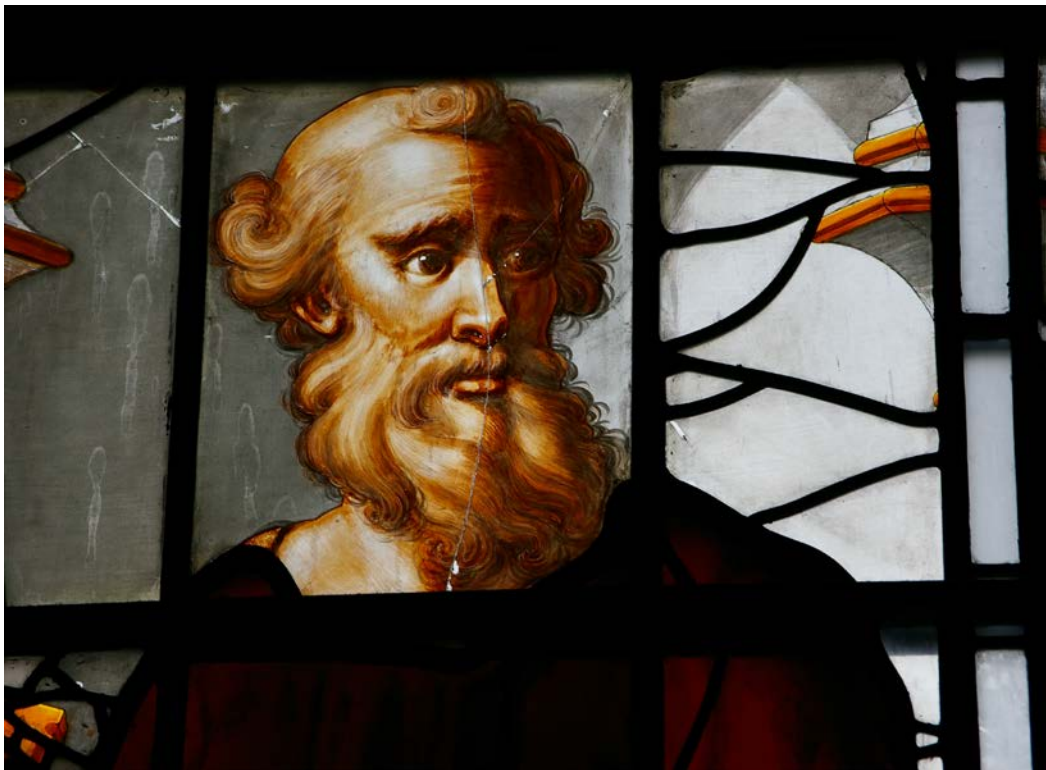
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<sup>210</sup> Peckitt and Peckitt, "Commission Book." No.148. May 1769. For Edward Byron Esq, Three figures of St John, St Peter and St James in niches with pinnacle tops and pedestals to each in full proportion with the Agnes Dei surrounded with Glory, Cherubims, Clouds, etc. See also; A C Sewter, *The Stained Glass of William Morris and His Circle* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). Plate 2 and p3.



Figure 40: William Peckitt, The Saints Window at St Anne's, Manchester, c 1769, Photo: Author

The pot metal colours are still vivid with little damage and the drapes well executed. The painted glass reveals a delicacy of touch and an eye for detail more akin to fine art painting that would not have been discernible when looking at figures of the West Window from a distance, whilst the pinnacle work and niches, executed in white and embellished with gold stain, reference and interpret gothic niche-work in an overtly rococo style. The colouring of the robes echo those detailed in the printed description of the Exeter window and provide a visual clue to their appearance. Although a quantity of armorial and decorative glass survived when the Exeter window was taken down, the figures disappeared without trace.<sup>211</sup>



**Figure 41: St Anne's Manchester Figure of St Peter, Detail. William Peckitt, c. 1767**  
Photo: Author

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<sup>211</sup> Earl Orford, responding to Marlborough's letter in 1903, had asked for the figures to be sent to him at Mannington at his own expense. Searches of the archives held at Mannington have revealed no evidence to suggest that this was done.



The reasoning behind the choice of figures for the West Window is not documented by Dean Milles, although an aid to interpreting the armorials was given by Milles in the description of the window published in 1767.<sup>212</sup> Given Milles' antiquarian interests, it is likely that they deliberately referenced those in the original mediaeval window and that he updated them to represent the doctrines of the modern Church in England. There is general consensus that the ancient glass of the West Window originally matched that in the majority of the Cathedral's windows and contained a mixture of figural motifs mounted on grisaille backgrounds with decorative motifs and armorials filling the outer traceries and lights.<sup>213</sup>

Three saints in the Peckitt window were repeated from the East; those of St Peter, St Paul and St Andrew. In the East the figures of the three saints are placed in the outer lights of the principal tier on the south side with St Peter in the innermost of these, then St Paul and St Andrew in the outer, southernmost light.

In the West Window, St Peter, as patron Saint of the Cathedral, occupied the central light corresponding with a great wooden statue of the Saint placed above the Western door. The Figures of Saints Paul and Andrew were placed in the outermost lights, Saint Andrew on the north and Saint Paul on the south.

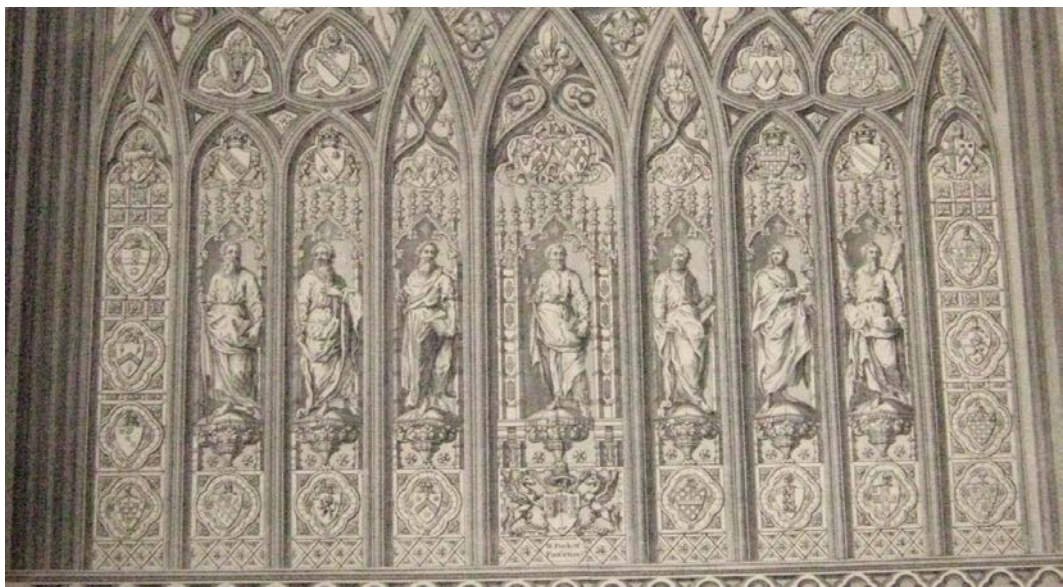
There was no attempt at Exeter to carry details of design of the figures across the East and West Windows. Although the figures of Saint Peter were robed similarly in purple

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<sup>212</sup> Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4669/1, Description of the Great West Window, Fully Completed."

<sup>213</sup> There is a general consensus that the West Window was originally filled with a mixture of figural work and emblems, including heraldic devices. For discussions of this see Drake and Drake, "Two Papers Dealing with the Ancient Stained Glass of Exeter Cathedral and More Especially with the Restoration of the Great East Window.", Drake, *A History of English Glass Painting.*,

or blue outer garments and red robes, there is no other direct correlation.<sup>214</sup> Rather, subtle differences in the attributes of the saints separated old from new and served to emphasise the New Church. In the East Window, St Peter is represented holding a Church in his right hand and a Crosier in the left. In the West, he was depicted holding keys and a book. St Paul is wearing a sword on his right hip in the East window, and carried a staff and a book in the West. St Andrew wears a blue badge at his neck with the blue Saltire Cross in the East, and in the West, was depicted with the St Andrew's flag repeated from the traceries above, and carrying a fishing-net across his back. His left hand was supported by a staff, mirroring that in the right hand of Saint Paul at the other extremity of the window.



**Figure 42: Robert Pranker, The Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral (detail – Engraving, c.1767. Exeter Cathedral Archive: 47669/1-3**

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<sup>214</sup> The printed illustrations and description of the finished window detail the colours as well as the motifs. A number of hand tinted copies of the window survive at Exeter Cathedral and at Exeter City Museum. The earliest printed description of the design and content of the window, engraved and printed by R Coffin, provides a key to the colours deployed.

See: Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4669/1, Description of the Great West Window, Fully Completed."

Each of the evangelists in Peckitt's window was depicted with a book and quill, with the exception of Saint John, who was depicted with a chalice and viper in his right hand and a book under his left arm, suggesting an emphasis of the Church in England on learning and science. Saint Paul carried a staff and a book, rather than the more traditional sword and book, suggesting a reference to his evangelical mission when he brought the scriptures to the ancient Britons. In this way, the figures were adapted for a modern audience. With the exception of Saint Andrew, each of the Evangelists and their supporters were depicted as scholars and educators (writers), as rational men of learning and science, dressed in classicised robes and presented in postures typical of classical statuary. When contemplated in relation to the remainder of the window, they reinforced the messages contained within the upper traceries. Saints Paul and Andrew, repeated from the East Window where they had been placed at Dean Milles' request, were depicted as pilgrims with staffs and the Word of God in the form of a book and thus as bringers of the old, pre-Augustinian faith to the British Isles.

The whole design of the Exeter window was bound together within unified border-work of diaper and mosaic of Peckitt's own invention. The completed opus presented visitors to the newly restored Cathedral with a dazzling display of intelligently imagined virtuosity in which the fabric of the Cathedral was neither compromised nor historicised via the use of exact copy. Instead, the mediaeval legacy of the ancient building was reviewed and given new identity within the coloured lights of the original tracery.

On completion of the glazing work, a dialogue was set in motion across the renovated windows and along the length of the interior of the newly decorated Cathedral in which ancient and modern were positioned side by side. Thus in one unifying action the windows served to remind observers and observants alike of the continuity of the

Cathedral's fabric and meaning. Subtle differences in the placement of armorial attributes in each window drew attention to the development of the church as well as highlighting parallels and variances between the ancient and modern doctrine and hierarchy. In the East Window, the mediaeval origins were honoured and brought into a modern idiom with the inclusion of carefully selected decorative and didactic devices. In the West Window, modern subject matter in the form of the apostles and evangelical saints depicted with scholarly attributes was tempered with stylistic references to the gothic, pre-roman legacy of the Cathedral Church. Careful placement and repetition of key figures in the establishment and development of the Church echoed across the building from East to West, ancient to modern, presenting an alternative, older history of the Church in England. Church and state were presented in harmony within the design by the means of armorial devices and insignia. The finished window presented admirers with a contemporary iconography that could be read by all those who visited the building.

Dean Milles, whose vision and zeal for the improvements was informed at all times by antiquarian interest, declared himself to be pleased with the result. In commenting on the 'beauty and richness of the colours, the variety of the design, and the 'propriety' of its ornaments, it may be presumed that he was referring in equal measure to the didactic messages of the design, the interlocution between East and West, and the visual blending of old and new.

### **Continuity and Change – The Aesthetics of History**

As has been argued in Chapter Two above, Dean Lyttelton and Milles relied significantly on visual analysis in their investigation of the history of the building.

Considering their reliance on this means of enquiry it is highly probable that a

heightened awareness of the aesthetics of the medieval building underpinned their programme of improvements, not least in the nature of the glazing programme and in their choice of practitioner.

The reasons behind the decision to remove the window in 1903 are complex, but overarching influencing factors were contained within the principles of the Victorian Gothic Revival. These principles extended those witnessed in the eighteenth-century antiquarian endeavours exemplified by Deans Lyttelton and Milles. In addition to a desire that historical observation should be based on scientific and methodical enquiry, were the multiple notions of truth; to material, to nature, to history, truth to architecture and so on. What is more, the mediaevalising spirit of the Gothic Revival looked back to an earlier era that was perceived to be purer and less likely to be tainted from any alien influence.

The requirement that glass should be true to the setting in which it was placed, true to the architecture of which it was part and true to the materials with which it was made was embedded within this canon. This canon has persisted. During the Victorian period, an unshakable benchmark for stained glass was set that continues to inform practice and commentary alike.

Accordingly, one of the key factors in the arguments about the removal of William Peckitt's window at Exeter was the appearance of the glass. These were expressed in increasingly strong terms. When Marlborough first sought compliance from subscribers to the original window to remove it, he had written about the horror of having to view '*orange lines*' on a daily basis.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4670/1-15, Letters from Various Persons in Reply to a Request for a Subscription Either to the Part of the Great West Window or to a Coat of Arms in It.."



**Figure 43: William Peckitt, Exeter Cathedral Deanery, Great Hall, 1768, Photo, Col. Woodcock**

This undeniably anecdotal appraisal of the visual attributes of Peckitt's glass encapsulated contemporary opinion, but Cathedral architect, G F Bodley's attacks on the window were altogether more vehement and indicate more widespread opinions

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Jeremiah Milles made considerable improvements to the Deanery, including the insertion of new glass in four windows overlooking the gardens. The four windows comprise six sash panes in the lower half with a circular headed light at the top. Not all of the glass survives, but each window contained an armorial designed by Peckitt. The earlier date in the panel illustrated suggests that some older work of Peckitt's was incorporated into the windows.

held about the aesthetic qualities of eighteenth century stained glass generally. In the spring of 1903 he wrote of the West Window:

“In colour it is most inartistic, and in drawing it is beneath criticism. Indeed, it is utterly without merit. The glass, so cruelly crude and harmful to the beauty of the building seems to pervade the whole interior. It has not age to make it venerable, and certainly not any art to make it desirable. ....It is ugly and deforms the beauty of the church.”<sup>216</sup>

Bodley’s comments were rooted within an ideal of stained glass that was initiated during the early years of Pugin’s Gothic Revival.<sup>217</sup> The canon of glass that evolved during the period referred almost obsessively to archaeological precedent and insisted on strict adherence to a set of High Victorian truths described above.

Nineteenth-century observers noted that mediaeval glass was made up with the pure colours afforded by the use of pot-metal glass, a purity of line, simplicity of design, and a unity of motifs. They noticed that the canopy and decorative work referenced motifs used throughout the structure and executed in other materials. A doctrine of aesthetic cohesion that focused on a particular moment in time was thus imposed on religious buildings that had evolved over hundreds of years and that had gone through many metamorphoses, the alterations of each era adding to the rich palimpsest of architectural embellishment.

Whilst Stuart Moore and other supporters of Peckitt’s window sought to preserve a rich diversity, Bodley and other detractors, including the Dean and Chapter wanted a

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<sup>216</sup> Bodley, "Letter to the Editor."; Marlborough and Bodley, "Exeter Cathedral; to the Editor of the Times."

<sup>217</sup> General works on the Gothic Revival include: Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay on Taste*. Eastlake, *History of the Gothic Revival, (1872)*. Jane Fawcett, ed., *The Future of the Past, Attitudes to Conservation 1174-1974*, Second Printing ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), George Germann, *Gothic Revival in Europe and Britain; Sources, Influences and Ideas*, trans. Gerald Onn (London: Lund Humphries, 1972), David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985). David Watkin, *The Rise of Architectural History* (London: Architectural Press, 1980).

unity of design manifest within the ideals of Gothic Revival. When held up against this defining ideal, Peckitt's glass was found to be deficient.

In 1903, when the move was first made to remove the eighteenth century window, the Cathedral had recently undergone a transformation under the successive stewardships of Sir Gilbert Scott, J L Pearson and G F Bodley. Pearson was architect of Truro Cathedral, a magnificent new cathedral, constructed in the Gothic style and glazed throughout by Clayton & Bell.<sup>218</sup>

All renovations at Exeter were duly executed in the most rigorous Gothic style, the impetus of the programme being to restore the Cathedral to its original and unified splendour. Whilst Scott was responsible for the bulk of restoration work carried out within the Cathedral itself, Pearson worked largely on the actual fabric and structure of the cathedral, his work culminating in the part completion of the rebuilding of the cloister walks. This phase of work on the fabric reached completion in 1888.

Integral to the restoration project and essential if it was to succeed aesthetically, was the installation of a considerable quantity of new glass. Much of this was executed by the foremost firms of the day including Powell, Clayton & Bell, Burlison & Grylls, Hardman, and Drake.<sup>219</sup> Over fifty windows were commissioned. Bearing in mind the requirement for unity, for truth to materials and adherence to the Gothic ideal as it was then being presented, the sentiments of the Dean and Chapter might be viewed sympathetically as Peckitt's glass would have stood out significantly from the 'painted

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<sup>218</sup> The glass at Truro Cathedral is currently being researched by Michael Swift, advisor for stained glass in the Diocese of Truro with a view to publication in spring 2011. See also: H Miles Brown and L Braithwaite, *The Story of Truro Cathedral* (Penryn: Tor Mark Press, 1991).

<sup>219</sup> For a survey of leading firms of Victorian stained glass makers in London, see Marta Galicki, *Victorian and Edwardian Stained Glass: The Work of Five London Studios* (Bristol: Morris and Juliet Venables, 2001). Martin Harrison gives a comprehensive appraisal of stained glass of the period in Harrison, *Victorian Stained Glass*. (London, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg, Barrie and Jenkins), 1980



blinds' that so irritated Stuart Moore.<sup>220</sup> It might also be argued that the attitude of the Dean and Chapter and their advisors were coloured by comparisons to the magnificent uniformity of decoration and design in Pearson's Truro Cathedral where glass designed by Clayton and Bell was destined to adorn all of the windows of the new building in one continuous narrative sweep of an integrated didactic scheme. Peckitt's work differed greatly from these examples, making it difficult to apprehend that the artist's work was based on first-hand observation of the mediaeval precedent and that it did represent a major achievement of his time.

Within a culture that demanded seamless synchronicity between art, glass and architecture, William Peckitt had been described as the 'best of a bad bunch', but Maurice Drake, who expressed this opinion, had nothing else complimentary to say of eighteenth-century practice:

"The eighteenth century from an artistic point of view was a slough of despond, and its stained glass was the worst thing it produced. So bad was it, indeed, that one would hesitate to mention it at all were it not for the startling fact that even so, the continental painters still managed to achieve something inferior. . . . . To sum up ..it was left to the eighteenth century to show to what depths of degradation English glass could fall, and to demonstrate what rubbish our glass-painters could turn out once they were assured of good solid backing of ignorance and bad taste on the part of their employers to aid their own ineptitude."<sup>221</sup>

Drake was a glass painter and restorer who had learnt his trade in Exeter at his father, Frederick Drake's side.<sup>222</sup> Part of Maurice's apprenticeship had been spent aiding his

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<sup>220</sup> Stuart A Moore FSA, "Exeter Cathedral," *The Times*, 22 October 1872.; Stuart A Moore FSA, "Exeter Cathedral," *The Times*, 07 Feb, 1903.

<sup>221</sup> Drake, *A History of English Glass Painting*, Moore FSA, "Exeter Cathedral." pp 98-99

<sup>222</sup> Brooks and Evans, *The Great East Window of Exeter Cathedral: A Glazing History*, pp48-51 For an account of the work of the firm of Drake and Sons on the G E Window at Exeter and other mediaeval windows in the county of Devon

father in the restoration of the mediaeval glass of Exeter Cathedral's Great East Window and at the time of this publication, he was an innovative practitioner in the Arts and Crafts style, and a respected authority on the medium. He was clear about the parameters within which stained and painted glass should be assessed and the glass he found so offensive fell far short of a standard set by himself and his contemporaries. Thus Drake, writing in 1912, was observing from the perspective of the later Gothic Revival wherein the reverence for history and the verisimilitude of exact copy exhibited in glass had been redefined. The disciplines of history, architecture, aesthetics, etc had been separated, and the canon demanded a greater and more emulative adherence to the art of the mediaeval craftsman that had become more rigorous in the interpretation of the 'truths' to historic precedent.<sup>223</sup>

Drake and others were not the first to observe a deficiency in Peckitt's glass. As early as 1806, a relatively short time after the artist's death, his work fell foul of an antiquarian, the Reverend James Dallaway, who, in his *Observations on English Architecture*, labelled Peckitt's work as 'inferior', 'gaudy' and 'too bright'.<sup>224</sup> This opinion did not concur with an earlier appraisal of the 'fine' art of glass painting.

Dallaway had written extensively on stained glass in his book: *Anecdotes of the Arts in England: Or comparative observations on Architecture, sculpture and Painting, Chiefly Illustrated by Specimens at Oxford*.<sup>225</sup> A full chapter was dedicated to the medium, and although it related directly to Dallaway's antiquarian interests, it is indicative of the

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<sup>223</sup> For a discussion of stained glass of the era, with particular reference to stained glass in the Westcountry, see Jim Cheshire, "Stained Glass and the Victorian Gothic Revival" (Manchester University Press, 2004).

<sup>224</sup> Revd James Dallaway, "Observations on English Architecture, Military, Ecclesiastical and Civil," *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1817 1806. p.392

<sup>225</sup> Revd James Dallaway, *Anecdotes of the Arts in England: Or Comparative Observations on Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting, Chiefly Illustrated by Specimens at Oxford*, 1st ed. (London: Cadell & Davies, 1800).

status awarded decoration as a whole. By putting stained glass and other decorative arts on an equal footing with the fine arts, Dallaway and other contemporary observers awarded them equal status.<sup>226</sup>

“In this reign a new style of staining glass has originated, which is the boast and peculiar invention of our own artists . . . . . Deviation from the hard outline of the Flemish Schools and the correct contour of Michelangelo, or the gorgeous colours of Rubens, is not more decidedly marked, than the design of the Van Linges, Prices and the masterly performances of Jarvis. (Jervais). A striking deficiency in composition of the early artists, was the necessity of surrounding the different colours of which the figures consisted with lead, and destroying, by that means, the harmony of the outline. Harshness was the unavoidable effect which they knew not either how to correct or obviate.”<sup>227</sup>

It would appear then, that Dallaway observed hints of mediaeval ‘uncouthness’ in the work of Peckitt.<sup>228</sup> Eighteenth-century visual and intellectual sensibility demanded a classical line, a seemly deployment of chiaroscuro and an intelligent, dramatic and legible ‘history’.<sup>229</sup> So much was this the case that some commentators on historic stained glass resorted to the deployment of an aesthetic vocabulary identical to that used in the description of canvas paintings. Amongst them was Joshua Kirby Baldrey (1745-1828), who, when writing a dissertation on the sixteenth-century windows of King’s College, Cambridge, declared them to have all the attributes of Historical Paintings –

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid. p419

<sup>227</sup> Ibid. p.448

<sup>228</sup> For a discussion of the development of attitudes towards stained glass and the evolution of the canon in relation to one particular location, see: Baylis, “the Most Untractable of Saxon Uncouthness’: Eighteenth-Century Painted Glass in Ely Cathedral and the Removal of the Choir.”

<sup>229</sup> For an overview and discussion of the development of western canons of art, see Gill Perry and Colin Cunningham, eds., *Academies, Museums and Canons of Art, Art and Its Histories* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

Viz. "Grand Composition, the human figure designed with the utmost freedom, great anatomical Knowledge and the various Passions exquisitely expressed..."<sup>230</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the dismissal of Peckitt's work as lacking in this sensibility by Dallaway was hotly contested by his heir and daughter, Harriet. Harriet had helped her father in the workshop, and was quick to come to the defence of her relative. She insisted, amongst other things, that her father's work resulted from many years' close observation and study and that through hard work, repeated and structured experimentation in the ancient art of making and staining glass, he had come as near to perfection as possible.<sup>231</sup>

"I yesterday perused your Book entitled Observation on English Architecture published in the year of 1806. ....My Father was not instructed by any one, nor assisted by any person except my Mother; he found out the secret by his own study and practice. .... The excellency of his colours, particularly the ruby, no one has ever excelled, or perhaps equalled; and had his proficiency been really so inferior as you have been pleased to say – as a self-taught Artist, his merits might have demanded at least candour and impartiality from the severest Critic."<sup>232</sup>

Harriet's insistence that her father had striven to emulate the style and expertise of his forbears is supported by the evidence of his practice and career. As reported above, Peckitt had been employed at York Minster for a number of years, both to restore and to repair the existing mediaeval glass and to execute new glass that would be in keeping with the existing glass. If Dallaway was seeking an exact copy of existing mediaeval glass, he would have been disappointed. When looking at Peckitt's work, he would have found neither an exact copy of ancient glass that as he looked at it, would

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<sup>230</sup> Cited in Baylis, "Glass-Painting in Britain 1760-1840: A Revolution in Taste". p90

<sup>231</sup> Peckitt, "Letter in Reply to the Rev Dallaway."

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

have been pitted with corrosion and faded with time, nor would he have found examples of picture glass such as that executed by Joshua Price with whom the comparison had originally been made.<sup>233</sup>

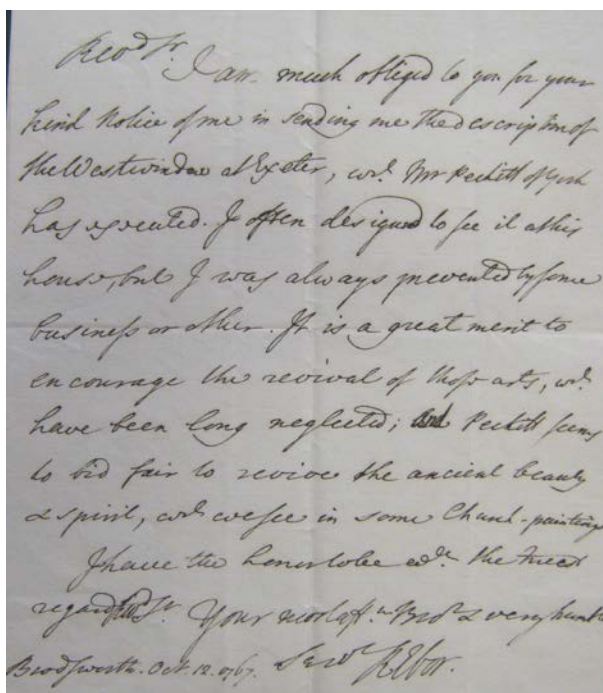
Luckily for Peckitt, Deans Lyttelton and Milles at Exeter did not share Dallaway's antipathy. When casting around for a suitable candidate to execute and install a new West Window, Peckitt was invited to submit a tender. For these two, who were for some time presidents of the Society of Antiquaries, it was of utmost importance to find someone whose work would be in keeping with the Gothic legacy of the Cathedral. Peckitt's work differed greatly from that of his contemporaries in that he was almost obsessively concerned with reviving a lost art as a whole, a quality that one correspondent attributed equally to Dean Milles. Writing from Brodsworth, the author of the letter illustrated, says

“It is a great merit to encourage the revival of those lost arts, which have been long neglected and Peckitt seems bid fair to revive the ancient beauty and spirit, [---] in some Church paintings.”<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Joshua Price's stained glass is mentioned in a number of works on the subject. See in particular: Charles J Abbey and John H Overton, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century* (Teddington: The Echo Library, 2009). pp 401, 403. Winston, *An Inquiry into the Difference of Style Observable in Ancient Glass-Paintings, Especially in England, with Hints on Glass-Painting*. p207

<sup>234</sup> Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4670/1-15, Letters from Various Persons in Reply to a Request for a Subscription Either to the Part of the Great West Window or to a Coat of Arms in It.."



**Figure 44: Letters from Various Persons in Reply to a Request for a Subscription Either to the Part of the Great West Window or to a Coat of Arms in It.** Exeter Cathedral, "Ms 4670/1-15,

Peckitt's work at York Minster was proof that the artist had as much visual sensitivity to the ancient glass as he did technical ability and in this, exhibited the an antiquarian approach to this craft.

The unifying decorative elements characteristic of Lyttelton and Milles' restoration programme, described above in Chapter Two, suggest that they were keen to achieve visual harmony throughout all the elements of the improvements. Their antiquarian interests impacted significantly on the way that this was achieved. For this reason, it was important that the glass should at one and the same time reference the historic glass aesthetically as well as didactically as described above.

Neither Sir George Gilbert Scott, nor glazier Frederick Drake, who conducted a full survey of the cathedral's glass during that time, was fully convinced of the need to remove the Peckitt window. Both, like W R Lethaby, are reported as declaring it to

be of important historic interest. Additionally, Drake in particular recognised the Georgian restorer's acute comprehension of the visual impact of the original mediaeval glazing; even if they did not agree with his method of articulating that knowledge. (Frederick Morris Drake referred despairingly to the eighteenth-century interpretation of grisaille as 'sausages' in a paper on the mediaeval stained glass of the cathedral, given in 1908).<sup>235</sup>

During his survey Frederick Drake had built up a comprehensive picture of the nature and visual unity of the historic scheme. In his report, he revealed that the mediaeval remains showed that the entire cathedral lights had at one time been filled with figural glass similar to that now located in the Quire Clerestory.



**Figure 45: Central lights of four-light window. Remnants of medieval window restored and placed North aisle of Choir Clerestory**

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<sup>235</sup> Drake and Drake, "Two Papers Dealing with the Ancient Stained Glass of Exeter Cathedral and More Especially with the Restoration of the Great East Window." p2.

Here, the figures of saints and patriarchs, placed in the protective shelter of elaborately pinnacled niches were supported on a ground of grisaille. Elsewhere, Drake found sufficient evidence to suggest that all the nave and nave clerestory had been glazed with figures and armorials similarly set into grisaille backgrounds. He had conducted this survey at the same time that Stuart Moore was ordering the Muniments and the antiquarian had this to say about the aesthetic of the glass and Peckitt's sensitivity to it:

“[Peckitt] .....did what scarcely any modern glass painters have done – that is, he considered the necessities of the lighting of the building and subordinated his window to the intention and design of the original architect by erecting a decorative but light giving window which allows the full effect of the beautiful groining and decorated columns of the Cathedral to be seen. .... The bills for the [original] glass show that the highest proportion of colour to white glass was one-fourth of colour while in the side windows it was even less. Peckitt ....has done his best to endeavour to treat the west window in the same spirit.”<sup>236</sup>

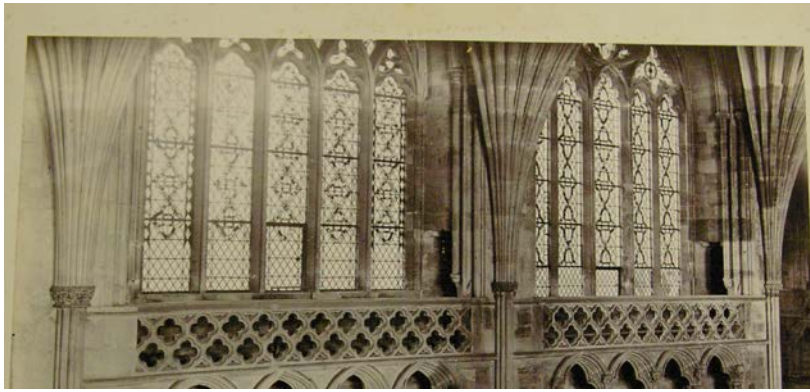
As reported by Drake and Moore, the mediaeval lights had been bordered with decorative mosaic and diaper in designs that were echoed across the breadth of the cathedral from window to window, light to light. The grisaille was tinted blue in the side windows of the nave and aisles to diffuse the light, whilst a golden tint was used at the East and West ends where less light penetrated from outside. The entire cathedral, Drake surmised, would have been bathed in light diffused through these windows, golden at the beginning and end of the day, and silvery during the day's length.

Lyttelton and Milles had overseen the filling of the side windows with geometric designs which echoed the grisaille patterns of the mediaeval remains.

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<sup>236</sup> Moore FSA, "Exeter Cathedral."





**Figure 46: Exeter Cathedral South Aisle Clerestory, circa 1903, Exeter Cathedral Archive, Exeter Cathedral, Dean and Chapter, and Misc. "Ms 7170/51**

Fragments of the mediaeval glass were used to fill the shapes. Light filtering through plain glass, and tempered by the coloured fragments within the decorative devices would have bathed the interior with a diffused silvery light. Peckitt also glazed the two windows in the western end of the Cathedral with geometric floral designs in yellow, described by one observer to be in the shape of sunflowers. The West window was further reputed to cast a great arch of flickering golden light into the interior of the Cathedral under the setting rays of the sun. This is borne out in both the annotated and hand coloured prints of the window prepared by R Coffin in 1772.



**Figure 47: Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral. Hand tinted engraving. R Coffin, c1772. Exeter Cathedral Archive, Prints. 144**

Milles and Lyttelton had thus observed and interpreted the visual attributes of the mediaeval glass, replicating its effects in his overall glazing scheme for the Cathedral. Whilst Dean Milles, who commissioned and decided on the content of the Great West Window had the artist include devices which narrated the history and development of the fabric and the Church, the artist observed History's effect and replicated it in the execution of his designs. Peckitt and the patrons, just as their counterparts in the nineteenth century, closely observed the visual legacy of the cathedral's mediaeval craftsmen, and understanding the evidence laid out before them, replicated it for those who had the eyes to see.

## Conclusion

The eighteenth century improvements outlined in this study have been shown to be influenced by much more than a matter of style. The refurbishments were not, as a number of later detractors opined, intended as a purely superficial measure, but were intentionally designed to reinstate a visual coherence to the interior of the Church. The combination of artist and patron, each having an equal sensitivity to the historic and artistic legacy of the Cathedral Church, observed the harmonisation of diverse decorative elements installed by their mediaeval predecessors and adapted the effect to suit the needs and dictates of the times. However, the language of the improvements did not comply with the ideals of its later critics and elements of restoration were deemed hideous and 'unworthy' of the sacred and venerable space.

The variety and strength of opinion expressed during the protracted arguments regarding the removal of Peckitt's 'masterpiece' suggests the presence of a deep, but intangible unease that had as much to do with the window's iconography as it had to do with the physical appearance of the glass. Although there was no overt reference to the politicised iconography of the window, the language used to describe its defects betrays a sense of distaste with its dictates. It is variously described as 'sordid', 'inappropriate'; 'unedifying', and even 'a potent for evil'.

It is true that Peckitt's Great West Window, when viewed in tandem with the remainder of the glazing, and in particular the repair and re-ordering of elements of the Great East Window, offered those suitably equipped with a set of very definite messages about the modern Church. Subtle revisions of the saintly attributes between East and West, when considered in conjunction with the repositioning of emblems of the founders of the Cathedral church, suggest a deliberate orchestration that positioned the Cathedral as an ancient Christian foundation. But rather than historicising the cathedral as a monument to Christianity, the improvements articulated renewal and presented the Church as a modern institution that nevertheless had its roots in ancient Christianity.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> For a full discussion of ways in which improvements were executed for this purpose see: Alexandrina Buchanan, "Interpretations of Medieval Architecture 1550-C1750," in *Gothic Architecture and Its Meanings 1550-1830*, ed. Michael Hall (Reading: Spire Books, 2002). pp27-50

The project was informed at all times by the antiquarian interests of the two men that led it and its messages were more complex than even this politicised reading allows. Dean Milles' stated ambition was to render the Cathedral Church 'equal to any in the land'.<sup>238</sup> Indeed, the improvements at Exeter were not conducted in isolation but were part of a much wider project. The Cathedral Church was mother church of a Diocese that encompassed the two peninsular counties of Devon and Cornwall. As such, it had to be rendered fit for purposed and suitably equipped as a proper example to the See as a whole. Arthur Warne reports a vibrant and proactive church structure in eighteenth-century Devon, during which time thirteen churches were built in the county, and a significant number repaired and redecorated.<sup>239</sup> The eighteenth-century improvements established Exeter Cathedral as a figurehead for this vibrant ecclesiastic community.

On a wider scale, many, if not all of the major Cathedral Churches nationwide were being repaired, decorated or 'improved' with many new works of art commissioned towards this end.<sup>240</sup> The arts were accepted means of promoting piety and of defining the Anglican position as distinct from those of its rivals. At Exeter and elsewhere, historic stained glass was repaired, and new stained and painted glass commissioned as part of this process. In choosing Peckitt to affect the repairs and to install entirely new glazing in the second most important window of the Cathedral, Dean Milles was sending out a clear message about the stature of the Cathedral and the See under his care. As we have seen, Peckitt was an artist of national renown and came to Exeter having completed new windows at York, Oxford, Lincoln and elsewhere. The correspondence between Deans Milles, Lyttelton and Fountayne at York provides evidence of the communication and collaboration between members of the ecclesiastic community in Britain on the matter of the conservation of the churches under their care. None of the correspondents betrays any doubt about the propriety of commissioning major works of art for an ecclesiastic setting; indeed, Dean Milles was

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<sup>238</sup> Milles, *A Description of the New West Window in the Cathedral Church of Exeter*.

<sup>239</sup> Warne, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century Devon*. Introduction.

<sup>240</sup> For a discussion of this aspect of church patronage see Jeremy Gregory, "Anglicanism and the Arts: Religion, Culture and Politics in the Eighteenth Century," in *Culture Politics and Society in Britain: 1660-1800*, ed. Jeremy Black and Jeremy Gregory (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991). pp82-109

congratulated on part the played by him in the revival of a lost art.<sup>241</sup> However, the commissioning of new works of art for display in a religious setting was not universally acceptable.

The Peckitt window was commissioned in the wake of a protracted row about the East window of the parish church at St Margaret's Westminster where the church wardens had purchased and installed a sixteenth-century window of the Crucifixion above a newly commissioned Gothic altarpiece at the East end.

The details of the row are discussed in detail by Sarah Baylis and can be summarised as follows.<sup>242</sup> The Church of St Margaret's had been used by the House of Commons since the early seventeenth century, as members of parliament had become critical of the High Church ceremonial practiced at Westminster Abbey. Amongst other objections, there was a general condemnation of the installation of an image that might be considered to be idolatrous. In addition to this, the churchwardens had failed to obtain a faculty from the Dean and Chapter, and a lengthy inquiry led to a prosecution in the Ecclesiastical Court.

As a direct consequence of the case, a pamphlet; *The Ornaments of Churches Considered; with a particular View to the late Decoration of the Parish Church of St Margaret's Westminster* was produced in which the authors set out a lengthy argument in support of the churchwardens' decision to install the glass.<sup>243</sup> Apart from this, the Rev. Hole presented a discourse on the role of the arts in religious buildings, pointing out firstly that there was now an established distinction between history paintings taken from sacred history, and pictures of 'false and feigned' miracles.

He went on to openly criticise the Anglican Church for having neglected its role as patrons of the native arts, prefiguring Barry's later impassioned campaign of the 1770s

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<sup>241</sup> Note 124

<sup>242</sup> Baylis, "Glass-Painting in Britain C1760-1840: A Revolution in Taste". pp.42-44

<sup>243</sup> There were numerous editions of this book. The version used for this study is the most complete of a set of four held at the library at Exeter Cathedral. Rev. William Hole, *The Ornaments of Churches Considered: With a Particular View to the Late Decoration of the Parish Church of St Margaret Westminster, to Which Is Subjoined, an Appendix, Containing the History of the Said Church and Other Papers. Edited with an Introduction and Postscript by Dr T Wilson* (Oxford: W. Jackson, 1774).

for the establishment of a British School of Painting that could only be made possible with the patronage of Church and State.

Going on to muse on the proper function of ornamentation in a church setting, Hole suggested that the Word alone was not sufficient on its own to engender religious feeling:

“To confine religion entirely to Spirituals may perhaps have been the Attempt of well-meaning Men, but certainly of bad Philosophers.”

Adding:

“Public Worship being once established, it must be performed somewhere, and this leads us to enquire, what structures are fittest for the Sacred Purpose. . . . . The question is ..what Objects of art the most proper to excite that spirit and truth which are the Essence of Religion.”<sup>244</sup>

The argument continues to suggest that just as the splendour of [a] Palace reflects the ‘most respectful’ ideas of the Prince that inhabits it, painting is a sign that triggers memory and ideas:

“We supply from Recollection and Imagination, the little Circumstances which Painting cannot relate, and feel the Effects it is peculiarly calculated to produce.”<sup>245</sup>

Striking a more patriotic note, Hole advocated the encouragement of religious art for another reason.

“There is yet another Motive which induces me to vindicate Religious Use of these elegant Arts, I mean the Hope of there one day appearing with all their Lustre in an Island whose Heroes, Philosophers, and Poets, have done Honour to Humanity, whist her Painters and Sculptors have scarce ever attained to Mediocrity”<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid. p28

<sup>245</sup> Ibid. p30

<sup>246</sup> Ibid. p36

Hole's discourse further tracked the development of the use of stained glass as an ornament to churches from the very earliest temples to the eighteenth century and is described by Baylis as both "a seminal art-historical document" of the eighteenth century and as "one of the pioneer works of the Gothic Revival".<sup>247</sup>

This last reason alone would be grounds enough for Deans Lyttelton and Milles to acquire a copy of the pamphlet. Several editions of the work are housed in the Cathedral library where, notably, one was added just a few months after its publication in 1760. The quantity of copies held and the length between the dates of acquisition suggest that the work was influential and remained so over a number of years. It is therefore not unreasonable to suppose that the earlier copy was placed there by Deans Lyttelton and Milles.

This presents an additional motivation for their programme of beautifying improvements within which the new West Window was the defining feature. Alongside the factors described above, the words of Rev. Hole must surely be considered:

"Since the pious Munificence of our Ancestors has raised the sacred Edifices appropriated to religious Uses, we are surely under the strongest

Obligations to repair as much as possible, the Injuries of Time, and preserve them by every Precaution from total Ruin and Decay. Where the particular Funds appropriated to this Purpose are insufficient it becomes necessary to apply to the Affluent, who cannot surely refuse to prevent by their liberal Contributions, the severe Reproach of neglecting those Structures which in all Ages have been held sacred."<sup>248</sup>

Deans Lyttelton and Milles could certainly consider themselves to be beyond reproach. In their careful choice of ornaments, they had proved themselves philosophers and innovators. Via the expediency of invited subscriptions they had equipped the Cathedral Church with edifying 'Objects of art'. Given the exposition contained within

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid. pp46 & 45 respectively

<sup>248</sup> Ibid. p137



this study, there can be no doubt that these were designed specifically to ‘excite that spirit and truth which are the Essence of Religion.’”

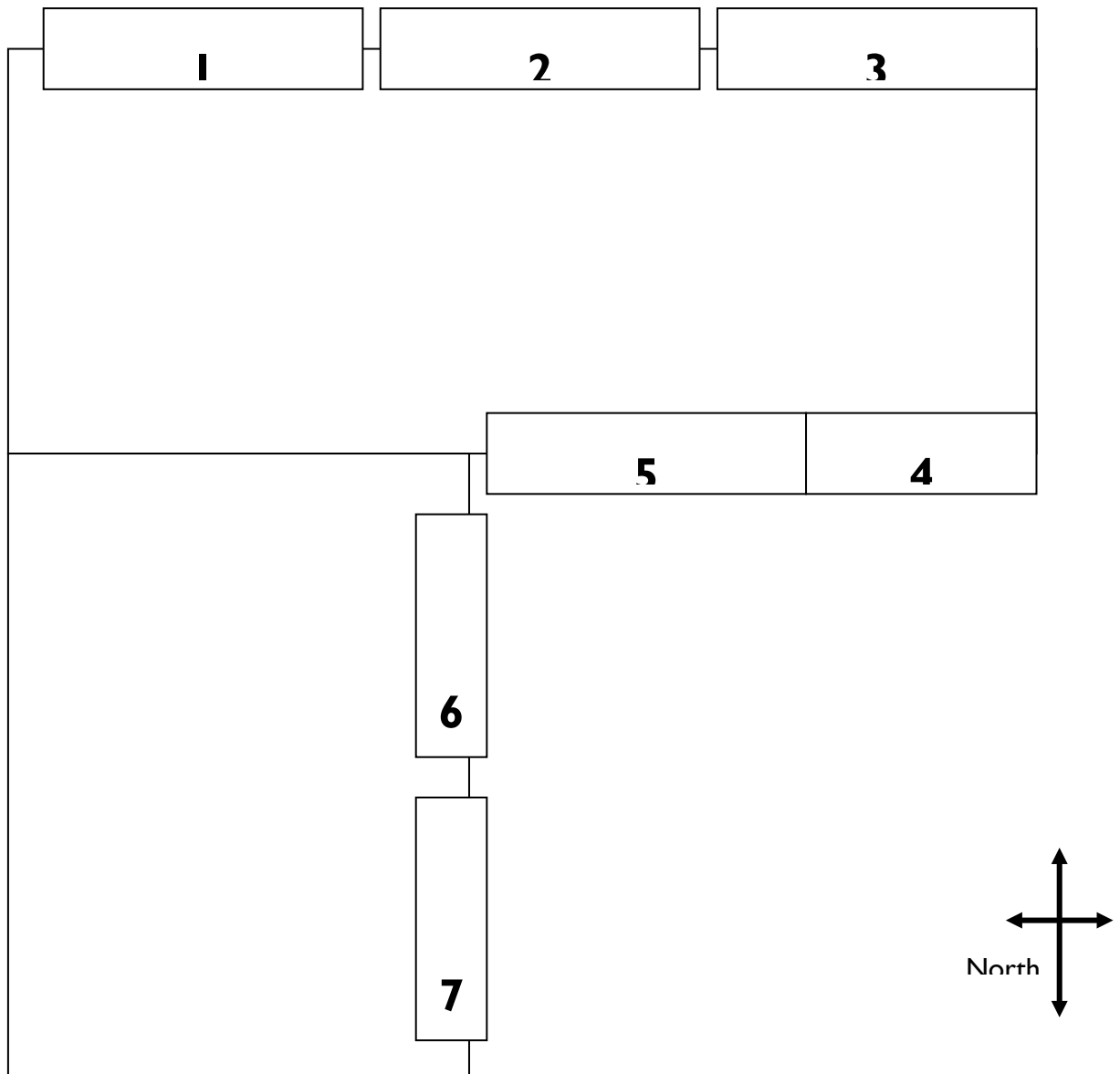
Milles’ decision to commission new glass for the Great West Window, arguably the most important decorative element of the restoration, helped to bring the project to the attention of a wide and prestigious public. As has been shown, the choice of artist was crucial to the success of the project. At the time of the commission, there was only one stained glass artist in the country who had the skill, experience and artistic flair to carry out the task successfully. Given the importance of the window, and the high profile of the restoration as a whole, The Great West Window at Exeter Cathedral can most certainly be confirmed to be one of William Peckitt’s ‘finest achievements’ and a ‘milestone’ in the history of the medium, as Lethaby and others argued.

## Appendix 1

### The Cloisters – Surviving Glass from the Great West Window

#### EXETER CATHEDRAL: CLOISTER ROOM AND CLOISTER WALK

Window notation in accordance with existing inventory numbering, (Col Woodcock, 2003)



*Not to scale*

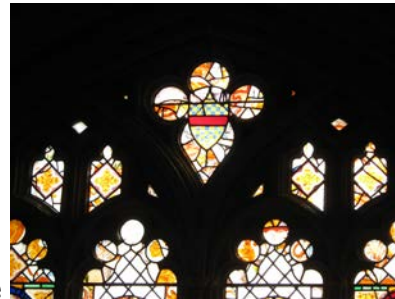


# EXETER CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS

## WINDOW ONE



CI Whole



CI Traceries

## Upper Row



CIU1

Carew



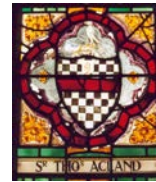
CIU2

Secker



CIU3

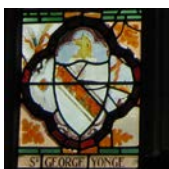
Grandison



CIU4

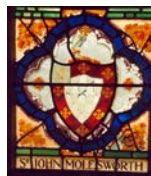
Acland

## Lower Row



CIL1

Yonge



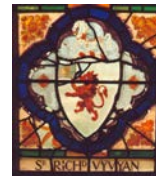
CIL2

Molesworth



CIL3

Elwill



CIL4

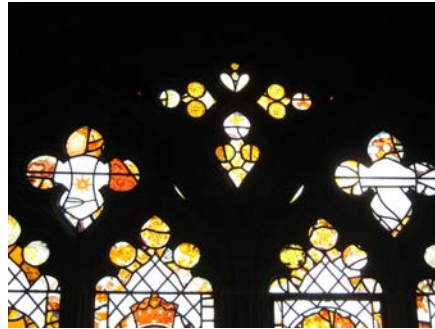
Vyvyan

# EXETER CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS

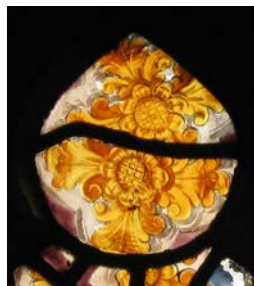
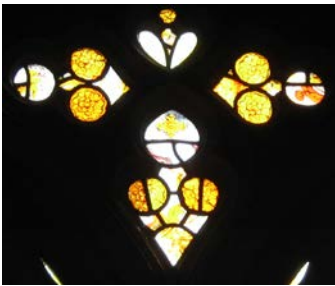
## WINDOW TWO (C2)



Whole



Traceries



## UPPER ROW



C2U1



C2U2



C2U3



C2U4

Orford

Bolton

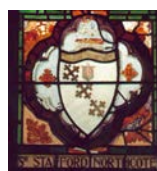
Bedford

Bampfylde

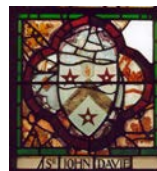
## LOWER ROW



C2L1



C2L2



C2L3



C2L4

Drake

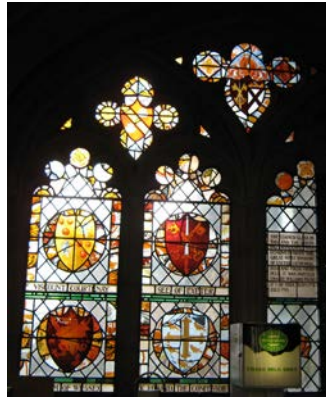
Northcote

Davie

St Aubyn

EXETER CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS

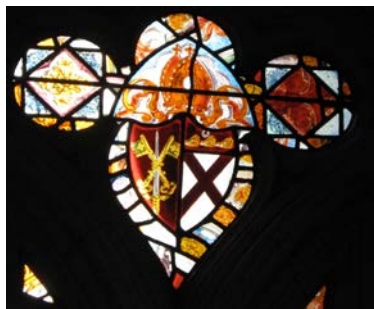
WINDOW 3



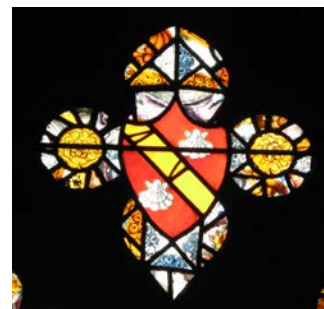
C3-Whole window



C3- middle light tracery



C3-APEX – Dean Lyttelton



C3 – Traceries – Lord Petah AD

1603



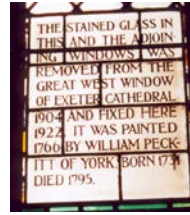
C3U1

Courtenay



C3U2

See of Exeter



C3U3

Inscription

blank



C3L1

Kingdom of  
Wessex



C3L2

Edward the  
Confessor

C3L3

A Coronet

## EXETER CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS

### WINDOW 4



Fragments of Peckitt glass in Traceries

## EXETER CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS

### WINDOW 5



Whole window with fragments of Peckitt glass in traceries



## EXETER CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS

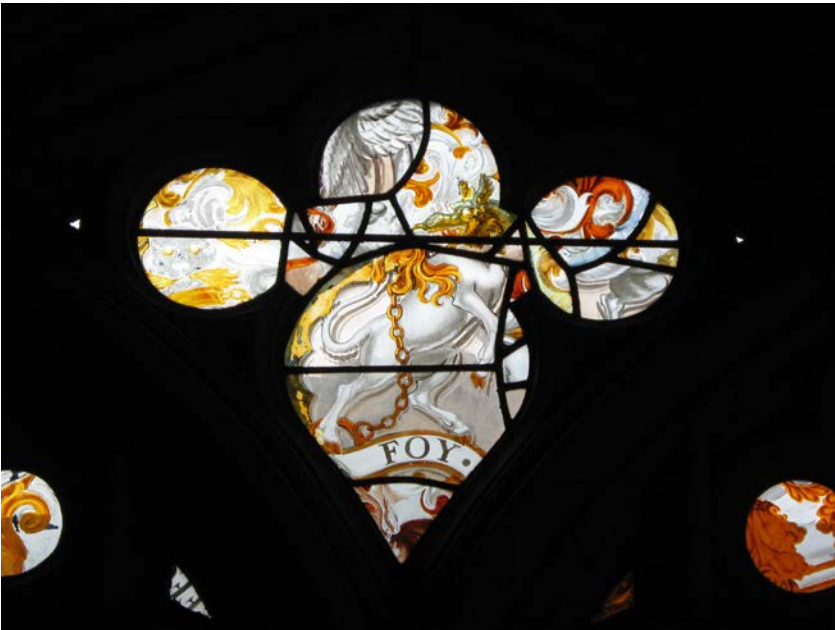
### WINDOW 6



Upper traceries with fragments of Peckitt glass

## EXETER CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS

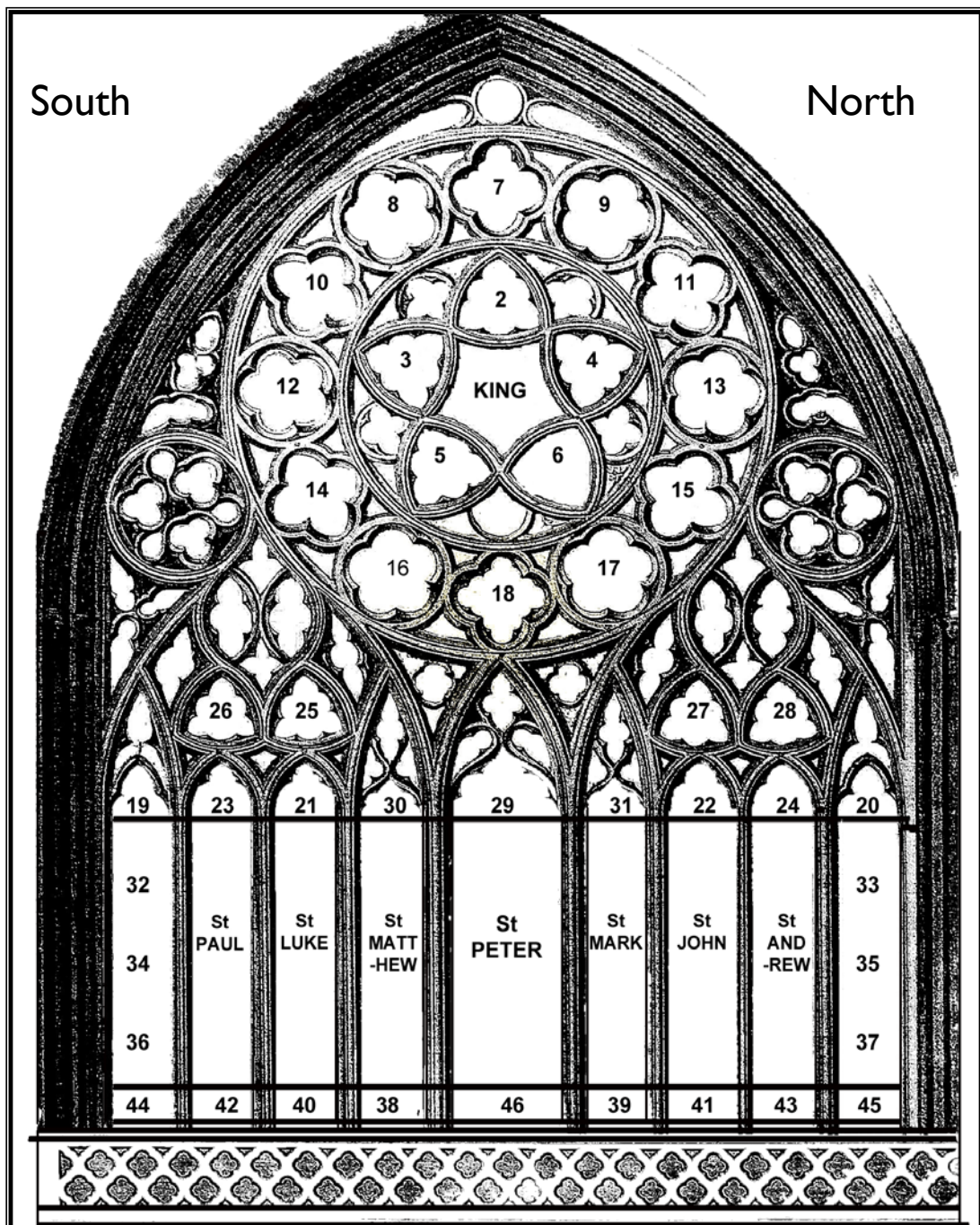
### WINDOW 7



Upper traceries with fragments of Peckitt glass

## Appendix 2: Notation of William Peckitt's Great West Window at Exeter Cathedral

### The Great West Window of Exeter Cathedral – 1766/7



*Notation of lights and tracery openings in the Great West Window. Nb. The notations follow those used in the eighteenth century description of the window issued by Dean Milles and subsequently circulated. Exeter Cathedral, Dean and Chapter, Print, 144.*

*Prepared from a photograph by the author. 2009*

## The Great West Window – 1767

The five central perpendicular lights of the window were filled with figures of Saints and Evangelists with the patron saint of the cathedral, St Peter, in the central light. The bottom of these and the outer lights were filled with the arms of the major donors to the window, each armorial enclosed within borders of decorative mosaic work with floral and scroll embellishments.

The upper part of the window was filled with armorials, ornaments and various iconographical and decorative devices. The great rose is divided into two concentric circles with two small circular lights on the lower extremities.

The arms are numbered in accordance with the description accompanied by the illustration that was issued on completion of the window in October 1767 in which the lights radiate from the centre in numeric order. The descriptions are transcribed from those included with the illustration and key ordered by Dean Milles on completion of the window.

### Coats of Arms

1a (top)      The Holy Lamb and Banner, placed highest as being the great hieroglyphic of Christianity

The Great Rose, inner wheel

1 (King)      The Royal Arms of England

With the rose, thistle, harp and fleur-de-lis, as emblematic of the four kingdoms of England, Scotland, France and Ireland

2              The Arms of the Saxon Kings

King Athelstan founded the church, AD 932

3              Arms of Edward the Confessor

Who removed the See from Crediton to Exeter, AD 1049

4              The Prince of Wales's Arms

AD 1336, as Duke of Cornwall

5              The See of Exeter

6              Bishop Grandison

Who finished the church and also the window, AD 1369, viz; 437 years from being begun by King Athelstan

#### The Outer Wheel

- 7 Dr Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury
- 8 Duke of Somerset
- 9 Duke of Beaufort
- 10 Duke of Bolton
- 11 Duke of Bedford
- 12 Earl of Godolphin
- 13 Earl of Granville
- 14 Earl of Orford
- 15 Earl of Buckinghamshire
- 16 Viscount Falmouth
- 17 Viscount Courtenay AD 1762

To which ancient and noble family did belong by inheritance and lineal descent, the Castle at Exeter and Vice-Earldom of the county of Devon

- 18 Hon. Dr. Keppel, Bishop of Exeter

#### Lower Lights

- 19 Dr Lavington, late Bishop of the Diocese
- 20 Dr Lyttelton, late Dean of the Church
- 21 Lord Petah, AD 1603
- 22 Lord Clifford, AD 1672
- 23 Lord Edgecombe, AD 1742
- 24 Lord Fortescue, AD 1746
- 25 Sir Richard Bamfylde, Bart, MP
- 26 John Parker, Esq, member of parliament for Devon
- 27 John Tuckfield, Esq, member of parliament for the city of Exeter
- 28 John Rolle Walter, Esq, member of parliament for the city of Exeter
- 29 Dr Milles, Chanter of the church
- 30 Mr Snow, Chanter
- 31 Mr Quicke, Chancellor
- 32 Sir Francis Drake, Bart

- 33 Sir Bouchier Wrey, Bart
- 34 Sir William Trelawny, Bart
- 35 Sir John Pole, Bart
- 36 Sir Stafford Northcote, Bart
- 37 Sir John Chichester, Bart
- 38 Sir John Davie, Bart
- 39 Sir Thomas Ackland, Bart
- 40 Sir Richard Vyvyan, Bart
- 41 Sir Thomas Carew, Bart
- 42 Sir George Yonge, Bart
- 43 Sir John St Aubyn, Bart
- 44 Sir John Molesworth, Bart
- 45 Sir John Elwill, Bart
- 46 The Arms of the City of Exeter

Which was built before London, BC 1100, constituted a city AD 162. Queen Elizabeth gave the motto "Sempre Fidelis".

In this window, which is 37ft high and 27 ft broad, besides the Coat of Arms, properly adorned, with supporters, coronets, crests, and mottoes. The spaces round the figures of the seven saints, which are 5ft high between the Arms and in the smaller lights, are elegantly filled with mosaic work, Gothic architecture, and foliage, etc, the whole together making the most beautiful appearance, perhaps not excelled by any other work of this kind in England.

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### **Personal Communication**

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