

REVIEW

doi:[10.1017/S0003581524000040](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003581524000040)

The Medieval Stained Glass of Herefordshire & Shropshire. By ROBERT WALKER. 260 mm. Pp xvi + 288, 197 figs. Logaston Press, Eardisley, 2023. ISBN 9781910839546. £25 (pbk).

Although the counties of Herefordshire and Shropshire – constituting the historic Welsh Marches – each have a wealth of surviving medieval stained glass, for some time it has not received the scholarly attention that it merits. Robert Walker’s fine book is therefore doubly welcome, both as a meticulously researched regional survey and as an exemplary and innovative approach to the wider study of ancient glass.

The book begins with an historical and iconographic introduction to glass in the Diocese of Hereford (which encompasses over half of Shropshire as well as all Herefordshire). Walker usefully discusses materials and technique, including the multiple use of cartoons (eg at Dilwyn, where two angel figures of c 1320–30 are identical but ‘flipped’) and the introduction of silver stain in the early fourteenth century. Although there is little evidence of a locally-based school of glaziers, Walker suggests that William of Hereford – associated with royal glazing projects in the 1350s – was active in the county of his birth, and he convincingly identifies a number of fourteenth-century glaziers’ workshops, characterised as the ‘Madley Master’, the ‘Master of Archangels’ and the ‘Master of the Chinless Madonna’, who all contributed significant work to churches in the diocese. Walker’s discussion of patronage highlights the role of the higher clergy, local aristocrats (such as the Mortimers, Bohuns and Talbots) and town guilds, while also noting that humbler donors sometimes stipulated the posthumous funding of windows in their wills.

The author’s chronological survey of the region’s glass, from the twelfth century to 1700, is a remarkably insightful analysis of stylistic and technical developments. What makes it especially valuable is Walker’s detailed focus on the post-medieval ‘after-life’

of windows, a dimension all too often neglected by medievalists. For almost every extant medieval window has undergone interventions – by plumber-glaziers, Victorian restorers or more recent conservators – that have ensured its survival, albeit often in a fragmentary form. Walker makes a point of documenting these procedures wherever possible, using ecclesiastical records, local antiquarian sources and, particularly for the nineteenth century onwards, newspaper and other periodical reports. Although the various efforts to preserve medieval glazing have varied widely in their sensitivity to the original work, Walker commendably recognises that these are now just as much a part of their cumulative history – and, importantly, equally worthy of study – as successive repairs and alterations to a building’s architectural fabric. This is perhaps especially pertinent to the region that is the book’s focus, since the Shrewsbury-based firm of Betton & Evans was responsible for restoring many important local windows, notably at Ludlow and Shrewsbury, between the early 1800s and the 1870s.

Walker’s comprehensive gazetteer of churches, divided into those in Hereford diocese and, as an appendix, those within north Shropshire, not only lists windows that can still be seen but also those recorded by antiquarians. For St Bartholomew’s at Richards Castle, for example, his listing includes reports dating from the 1600s (by Silas Taylor and Thomas Blount) of fourteenth-century glass, almost all of it lost by the time Stephen Glynne visited the church in the 1850s. While Walker observes that antiquarian interest was often too narrowly concerned with recording only heraldic data, there were exceptions; where possible, he illustrates sketches from the 1600s and 1700s (made by Richard Symonds, Thomas Dingley, William Mytton and others) showing details of figures and background glazing in lost windows.

Among the locations of outstanding stained glass in the Welsh Marches, several are of undoubted national significance. The east window of Madley church, in particular, has a magnificent array of panels, the earliest dating from c 1250. Walker comments that the latter, in their resemblance to ‘the great programmes of

medallions found in French and English cathedrals', are unique in any English parish church, suggesting that the commission was linked to the appointment of a Frenchman, Peter of Savoy, to the See of Hereford. The same window also contains three impressive figures from a fourteenth-century *Jesse Tree* by the 'Madley Master', whom Walker plausibly identifies as William of Hereford.

At Hampton Court Chapel in Hope under Dinmore, little of the important medieval glass remains *in situ*, most of it having been sold in the 1920s to museums and private collections in the UK and North America. Walker's extended essay on the 1420s–30s windows, reconstructing their original provenance – he suggests Leominster Priory – and documenting their subsequent dispersal is a masterly exposition of his detailed knowledge of the locality's history. Likewise, the book's account of the well-known windows at St Laurence, Ludlow, is a *tour de force* of careful research into their iconography,

commissioning (principally by the town's Palmers' Guild), stylistic characteristics and successive restorations. Walker's holistic approach to the material is refreshing. While acknowledging that David Evans's 1832 restoration of the fifteenth-century east window was 'drastic', he has no hesitation in applauding the 'highly skilled copying of historical styles of drawing' that carefully preserved the imagery of the medieval original.

Walker writes with a lively, appreciative and sometimes lyrical eloquence that is all too rarely found in scholarly studies of medieval glass. Above all, his text and his many excellent illustrations focus primarily on the windows as exquisite works of art – not simply as visual 'documents'. The book will undoubtedly inspire its readers to seek out for themselves the many vitreous treasures of the Marches.

PETER CORMACK