Stained Glass Windows in South Australia: their history and significance.

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The history of stained and painted glass in South Australia extends back to the very foundation of the colony in 1836. A small window was shipped out from England with the prefabricated church which accompanied the first Anglicans. Stained glass was also to be found in some early dwellings. Writing in 1890, Jane Watts recalled that in the early 1840s, when there were but six houses along the south Terrace of Adelaide, entry to her family's house 'was by a stained glass door at the side, which led into a small anteroom'.¹ This glass was imported from England. It forshadowed one of the chief aspects of the history of stained glass in South Australia, viz. the extent, wealth and diversity of glass which was imported from the earliest times to the present.

South Australia has a particularly extensive collection of imported stained glass. Most of it is religious in its subject matter and uninspired in its design and execution. Some of it is very fine work, but most is ordinary. However, there are many examples which fit comfortably into the mainstream of international stained glass history since the mid-nineteenth century and are significant because of this.

Until recently it has been customary to dismiss the bulk of Victorian stained glass because of its maudlin sentimentality and because of apparently unflattering comparisons with classical medieval stained glass. However this is to fail to understand the renaissance in stained glass which occurred during this period, after the easel painters of the eighteenth century had led it into a dead end. This revival, complementing the interest in Gothic architecture, was characterised by experimentation and inventiveness until about 1865.² In part it was fostered by the efforts of Charles Winston. He began in 1849 to analyse medieval glass, so that new glass, with the qualities of the old, might be made. During the latter part of the century the boom in church architecture ensured a ready demand for stained glass, a demand which remained high until the period of the First
World War, though the work from the major studios became more conservative and predictable.

What is believed to be 'the first stained glass ecclesiastical window received from the manufactory of any eminent artist in England', is a window from the firm of William Wailes of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This was installed in St Peter's College Chapel, Adelaide in November 1864. Wailes had established his stained glass business in 1838, and it became one of England's most significant provincial studios. Wailes's windows are rare in Australia, but several are to be found in Adelaide; at St Peter's Cathedral and perhaps more notably in the chapel of St Peter's College which is almost exclusively glazed with windows from Wailes.

However, South Australia has examples from the other leading British studios which fostered the revival in stained glass in the nineteenth century. For instance the work of John Hardman & Co. is to be found, particularly in Roman Catholic churches. Hardman's was the other significant provincial studio. Having previously specialised in ecclesiastical metalwork, it began making stained glass in 1845 at the suggestion of Augustus Welby Pugin, the architect and noted Gothic revivalist who designed much of the firm's early work. A host of other leading (and traditional) stained glass firms are represented in South Australia, primarily in Anglican churches, but also in some Roman Catholic churches. These firms include, among others, Heaton, Butler and Bayne; C.E.Kempe & Co.; Clayton and Bell; Jones and Willis; Ward and Hughes; and Percy Bacon Brothers. There is at least one window by Lavers, Barraud and Westlake. However, the most extensive collection appears to be from the firm of James Powell and Sons of Whitefriars, which began making stained glass in 1844 and continued to do so until 1973. This collection includes works from the early 1880s until at least the late 1920s. There are major windows like those at St Michael's at Mitcham and the Lady Chapel of St Peter's Cathedral, to smaller lights like those at St Peter's at Glenelg, St Martin's at Campbelltown, or St Andrew's at Mt Bryan, beyond Burra.

Taken together these windows reflect the major trends in contemporary stained glass design in England.
Besides the work of British studios, there is also to be found a great deal from Germany, particularly the work of F.X. Zettler of Munich. Examples of Zettler's work are to be found in both Catholic and Anglican Churches, including that in St Peter's Cathedral, which was installed in 1876.

In addition to the work of the more traditional studios, South Australia also possesses a fine collection of windows which are closely identified with the Arts and Crafts movement. This movement developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the perceived evils of the Industrial Revolution, notably the loss of many traditional craft skills. William Morris was the inspiration of this movement and therefore fourteen identified Morris & Co. windows in South Australia are particularly significant.

All of the company's windows in South Australia were made after the deaths of William Morris (1896) and Edward Burne-Jones (1898). However, the fact that Morris & Co. used and re-used original cartoons numerous times means that it is possible to appreciate those stylistic features which were peculiar to the firm, and to trace their development from about 1870 to the demise of the firm in 1940. The east window at St Augustine's at Unley exemplifies this. The window was made in 1928, but the original cartoon for the Epiphany scene was designed by Burne-Jones in 1885 and includes elements which also form part of the large tapestry *The Adoration of the Magi* which is preserved in the Art Gallery of South Australia. J.H. Dearle, the company's chief designer after Burne-Jones, was responsible for the scene depicting the three Marys at the open sepulchre, though he made the original cartoon in 1910. The figure of the Archangel Michael is another anachronism, originally having been designed by Ford Madox Brown, another of the company's founders, in 1862. Other Morris & Co. windows in and about Adelaide exemplify the same characteristics.

This multiple use of cartoons, and the factory production of windows, was roundly criticised by the later champions of the Arts and Crafts most notably Christopher Whall (1849-1924), one of the most influential British stained glass craftsmen of the early twentieth century. There is an example of Whall's later work in Christ Church at Mount Barker. A feature of the Arts and Crafts movement was the formation of numerous craft guilds and co-operatives, one of which was the Bromsgrove Guild of Applied Art,
founded c.1890. Though it specialised in metalwork and jewellery, there is in Christ Church at Strathalbyn, a small window designed by A.J. Davies of the Bromsgrove Guild in 1915.

The Arts and Crafts movement had repercussions beyond England. Its influence can be traced through Harry Clarke of Dublin to Richard King, also of Dublin. Two windows by King are to be found in Port Pirie and are perhaps South Australia's most significant dalle de verre windows. They were made to King's design by Abbotts of Adelaide in 1965.

The work of La Farge and Tiffany represents a peculiarly American response to this Arts and Crafts tradition. The Tiffany windows, which were once in St Paul's Church exemplify this response, and though it may have led into a dead end in innovative development in stained glass, it is nevertheless historically significant. These are the only known Tiffany windows in Australia. They contain many of the techniques which are identified with Tiffany, including the use of drapery glass and glass jewels, and multiple plating: the River of Life window illustrates one of Tiffany's most popular subjects, and reflects his predeliction for landscapes. These windows were made in 1909, when the studio was at its peak, unlike the products of many other overseas studios which are to be found in and about Adelaide.

Even in the period since the Second World War windows have continued to be imported from Britain - though not in the same quantity as before. These windows typify the work of the smaller studios, which have dominated the field since the war as labour costs have forced the closure of the large, hitherto traditional studios. This continued importation of windows has meant that South Australia continues to have examples of works which typify European, generally British, developments in stained glass design and fabrication.

As noted above, the most extensive collection of imported stained glass is to be found in the Anglican churches in South Australia. This is not surprising in a colony where, as a group, the Anglicans were characterised by 'wealth, respectability and organisation', and a ritualism akin to that of Roman Catholicism. The idea of an established church was roundly opposed in South Australia and the Dissenter influence was far greater there than in the other colonies, but the majority of the respectable and
politically influential colonists professed Anglicanism. Like the Catholics, the Anglicans had no theological objection to the use of painted and stained glass figure windows in their place of worship. Unlike the Catholics, however, who were primarily of working class and Irish stock, pious Anglicans preferred to choose stained glass windows from the catalogues of the major firms in Britain. This Anglican preference for British stained glass windows was but a reflection of the general development of stained glass in England at the time, where the Anglican Church was the chief patron of the revival.

It is only in comparatively modern times that significant stained glass windows have been placed in the churches of the more evangelical Protestant denominations. Traditionally there was a theological opposition to decoration which smacked of popery, but, like the Catholics, the Dissenter groups were generally made up of colonists who had not the wealth to be able to patronise overseas studios, even had they wished to do so.

The reasons for this wealth of imported stained glass in South Australia are not hard to find. In the foundation years, of course, there was no local industry of any repute; there were plumbers who could be called upon to install windows, but they were rarely called upon to design them.

The primary reason for the extensive use of glass is the fact that to provide it was a way of achieving a certain respectability in the new social order. As Douglas Pike observes 'the five roads to respectability in Adelaide were early arrival, thrift, temperance and its illegitimate offspring abstinence, piety, and the ownership of land'. What more conspicuous way was there of demonstrating one's piety, than by gracing one's church with a stained glass window? It is not surprising that so many of South Australia's most significant windows were in memory of members of South Australia's prominent families. The colonial gentility was unashamedly Anglophile. Things colonial were always considered inferior to those from 'home', thus it was natural that they should choose windows from established studios in Britain rather than patronise local studios. Local commentators regularly claimed that the best of the local work was comparable to that from overseas, but these very protestations exemplified the reality of the cultural cringe. This penchant for overseas windows was no doubt reinforced for Anglican patrons by Bishop Nutter Thomas's
early observation that many churches had 'one or two terrible windows' and by his decision that all designs must be submitted to him for approval.\textsuperscript{13}

However, although contemporaries frequently discounted the work of local stained glass designers, an indigenous industry did develop. The best of this work was very good and compared well with much that was imported, but at all times it reflected trends overseas. Nevertheless its history is important, particularly in the earliest period which has now passed from living memory.

Coloured glass windows were made in South Australia very early in its history. It is recorded that a James Stokes, who had learnt leadlighting in England before migrating to South Australia, made a window for Christ Church in Kapunda in 1858.\textsuperscript{14} The first regular studio was that of Edward Brooks, who installed the Wailes window in the Chapel of St Peter's College and had fabricated windows prior to this. In 1856 he had made a window for Christ Church at North Adelaide.\textsuperscript{15} Only a verbal description of this now exists, but another early one, a circular window made for the Glenelg Congregational Church in 1859,\textsuperscript{16} is still to be seen. Thereafter Brooks's windows were installed in churches throughout the settled areas: at Robe in the south-east, at Yankalilla, Burra, Gawler, Salisbury, Virginia, and in the city. All of his windows display a common distinctive style, using of geometric patterns and flashed glass. Only in later years was he responsible for painted figure windows. Brooks had learnt the trade of painting and glazing before he had migrated to South Australia,\textsuperscript{17} though immediately after his arrival in March 1839 he had had to work as a painter and plumber. After his death on 28 May 1874, the work was carried on for a time by his son William, who was responsible for glazing the Catholic Church at Stirling in 1883. However it seems that William survived because of his painting and paperhanging skills rather than those of glazing, though it is recorded that he exhibited a specimen 'of embossing on glass' at the Industrial Exhibition in Adelaide in 1884.\textsuperscript{18}

Two specialist stained glass studios developed during the 1890s. The most exclusively South Australian was that of E.F. Troy and Sons. Troy was by training a wood grainer and interior decorator. It was thus that he established his business in Adelaide in 1884. It seems that he expanded into stained glass work during the mid-nineties, conceivably with the
immigration of his designer Robert Elliot. In 1895 his stained glass and leadlight windows, which were exhibited at the Chamber of Manufacturers' Exhibition, were commended. Religious windows by Troy are to be found throughout South Australia. A significant feature of his work, however, is the number of secular windows which were commissioned. Thus the major Empire window in the Institute of Technology is the work of Troy and Elliot, his artist. It was completed in 1903. Other Troy windows include the Edward VII window in the City of Adelaide Council Chambers and the emblematic windows in Government House. Also of particular interest are the many Troy windows which are to be found in houses about Adelaide. There are many cheaper door surrounds in the bluestone villas of Adelaide, while more elaborate and expensive windows are to be found in the grander houses. The firm did not long survive Troy's death in April 1910.

A strict contemporary of Troy's was the firm of Montgomery and Grimbly. Montgomery was the same William Montgomery, the renowned stained glass artist, who had worked in stained glass studios in Britain and Germany before immigrating to Melbourne in 1887. It would appear that he was responsible for some of the earlier Montgomery and Grimbly windows in South Australia but it appears that the Adelaide part of the business was left primarily to Herbert Grimbly. Montgomery and Grimbly windows are to be found throughout South Australia. This firm also was responsible for commissions for private houses. It closed its Adelaide factory in 1910.

For a short time after 1908 there was an infusion of new ideas in stained glass design and fabrication when C.E. Tute opened a studio. He had worked for a time in Britain and had executed some major commissions. While in Adelaide he designed windows for St Paul's in the city and St George's at Goodwood, and he was responsible for the interior decoration of St Peter's Church at Peterborough. However he quit South Australia after only three years.

During the first half of the twentieth century local stained glass production became the preserve of those firms which were primarily glaziers rather than interior decorators like Troy or Tute. The most notable of these firms was that of H.L. Vosz - later Clarksons. Vosz was a glazier by trade, and migrated to South Australia in 1848. However, it was not until the last years of the nineteenth century, after Vosz's death in 1886, that...
J.F. Williams was taken on as an artist and the firm accepted stained glass commissions. Throughout the twentieth century until the Second World War, great numbers of Vosz/Clarksons windows were installed in buildings throughout South Australia. Thompson and Harvey began as leadlighters and glass bevellers in 1898, and later established a stained glass department, though at no time did it have a full-time artist. Abbott and Company began stained glass work in about 1936 and is now the only one of the major glass firms to have a stained glass craftsman on its staff. In other instances, the labour intensity of stained glass window fabrication, and the decline in popularity of such windows in the years immediately after the war, caused these firms to scale down and eventually abolish their stained glass operations. Since that time, in South Australia as in other regions of Australia and overseas, new stained glass work is largely the preserve of independent artists working in small specialist studios.

During the nineteen-seventies there has been a renaissance in stained glass design throughout Australia. It is yet too early to determine where this will lead. Much of this work is to be found in private dwellings, but some notable works, particularly by Cedar Prest, are to be found in churches and public buildings in many parts of South Australia, including all ten windows in St John's Church at Maitland, designed between 1976 and 1981. A feature of this series is the evident attempt to reflect particularly Australian and contemporary attitudes to a traditional art form.

Despite the wealth of overseas glass in South Australia and the emergence of a local industry, there is also to be found a considerable amount of work from interstate studios. At Yankalilla and at Delamere there are windows from Ferguson and Urie, the pioneer stained glass artists of Melbourne. That at Delamere was installed in 1889 after the decline of Brooks, but before of Troy and Montgomery & Grimbly had established stained glass works. During the early part of the twentieth century many windows by Brooks Robinson of Melbourne were also installed in churches in South Australia. Indeed it was a common practice of Thompson and Harvey to order figures from Brooks Robinson and to include these in windows otherwise fabricated in their own workshops. In the period from 1936 to at least 1949, several windows from Mathieson and Gibson, also of Melbourne, were installed in churches in South Australia. An abiding lack of faith in the local product is the only feasible explanation for this interstate traffic.
Certainly it is the only explanation for the great number of windows designed by William Bustard of Brisbane which are to be found in South Australia. Unlike local artists, Bustard's art training was complemented by several years' work at Powells of Whitefriars both before and after the First World War. He migrated to Australia in 1921. All the major windows at St Columba's at Hawthorn were designed by Bustard and others are to be found at All Soul's, St Peter's, St Cuthbert's, Prespect, St Peter's, Glenelg, and at Christ Church at Kapunda, amongst others.

Some of this interstate work is undoubtedly of superior quality to much that was produced locally at the time. Perhaps there are no finer Australian windows of the period prior to the Second World War than those of Napier Waller which are to be found in St Bartholomew's at Norwood. The Nativity window was made in 1938; the crucifixion window in 1941.23

In the period since the Second World War and the decline of the local stained glass industry, other interstate artists have had their work commissioned in South Australia. During the 'sixties several windows of Alan Sumner were installed in churches in and about Adelaide with Abbotts acting as his local agent. At the same time several windows by John Orval came to South Australia. A collection of ten windows is to be found in the Catholic Church at Mount Gambier and there are three in the Church of the Ascension at Aldgate.

It has been possible to give only a brief history of stained glass in South Australia. Indeed, because so little research has been done hitherto, there is yet a great deal to be discovered. It is evident however that there are a great many significant windows throughout the State. Many are fine pieces of art; others are significant primarily for the manner in which they reflect contemporary historical developments or developments in stained glass technology. However, they all make a contribution to our history. It is essential that there be an increased awareness of this so that the most significant items will be preserved. The 'Inventory of Stained Glass in South Australia' was conceived as a means of increasing an awareness of our stained glass heritage. The next step will be to ensure its proper preservation, but that is a whole new field.
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References

3. South Australian Register, 7 November 1864, p.2h.
5. Adelaide Church Guardian, 1 July 1935, p.5.
11. ibid., p.510.
12. South Australian Register, 12 December 1898, for the Bishop Short Memorial Window in St Peter's College Chapel. See also Adelaide Church Guardian, 8 October 1928, p.15.
14. ibid., June 1918, p.376.
15. South Australian Register, 26 December 1861, p.5e; Adelaide Church Guardian, 1 November 1946, p.7.
16. South Australian Register, 9 December 1859, p.3g.
17. He was indentured to John Beare on 11 March 1825.
18. South Australian Register, 22 May 1884, p.6f.
19. See advertisement in the Southern Cross, 4 January 1895, p.5.
22. ibid., November 1911, p.225.