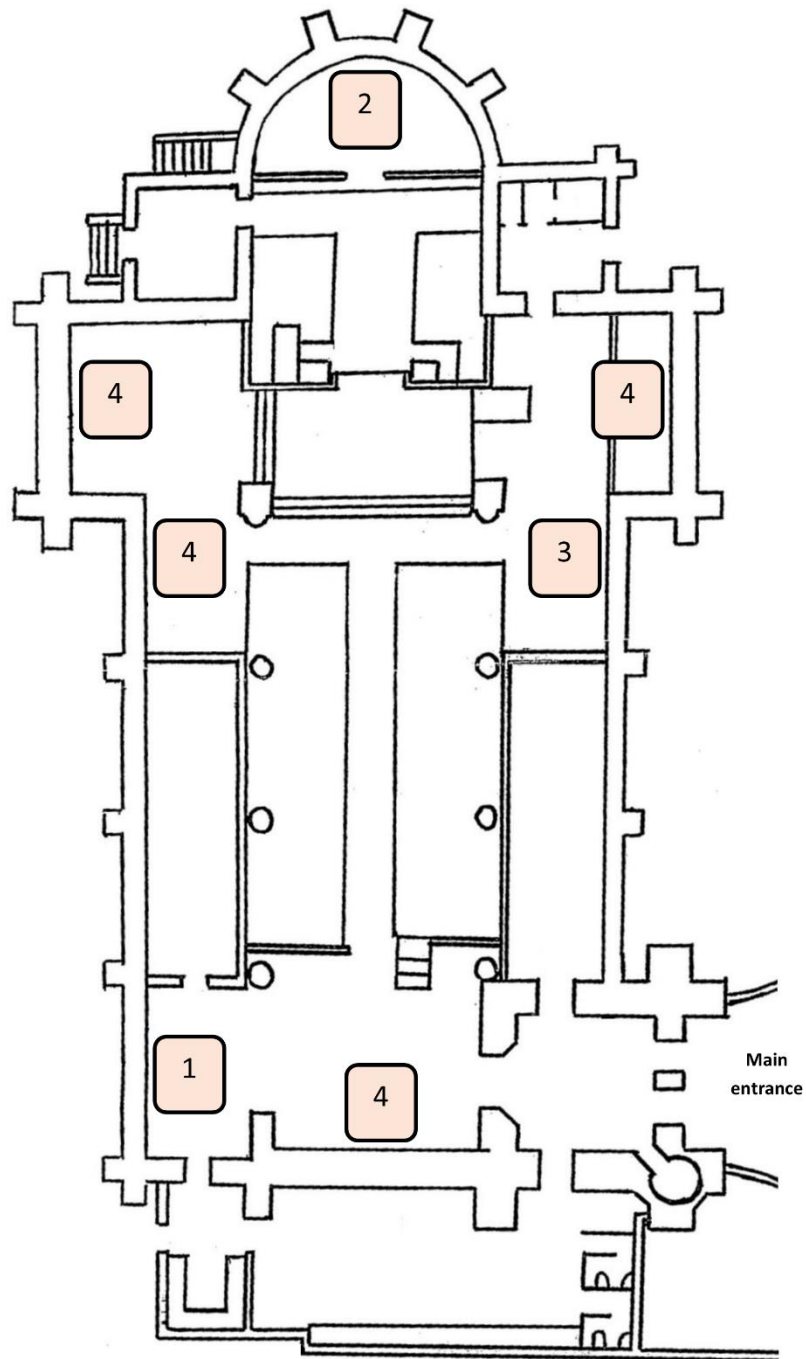




The Stained Glass Windows of St Matthew's Church, Surbiton



1. Clayton Memorial window

2. East windows

3. Caporn Memorial window

4. Quarry windows

1. The Clayton Memorial Window (Nativity Window)

This window was presented to the church by F.H. Clayton, a Churchwarden and nephew of F.S. Clayton, one of the very first wardens of St Matthew's. It was designed by Louis Davis, a prominent stained glass artist, and installed in 1921 in memory of two of Clayton's brothers, one of whom died in action at Ypres in 1915, and his sister Emily who, as the window records, died in 1889 aged only ten.

Louis Davis (1860-1941) is an important figure in British art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He is described by art historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner as 'the last of the Pre-Raphaelites' and knew Burne-Jones, John Ruskin and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. (Pevsner, incidentally, in 'The Buildings of England', describes St Matthew's as 'the stateliest church in Surbiton'). Davis is also remembered as an active and important member of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and his work shows the influence of William Morris, whom he also knew personally. Born in Abingdon, Davis trained with the glass artist Christopher Whall at the latter's home in Dorking. Initially he completed each of his windows himself from design to finished product, but his work was so much in demand by 1900 that he had to rely on stained glass manufacturers James Powell & Sons to make up the glass for him.

The principal glass painter at Powell's at this time was Thomas Cowell (1870-1949), on whom Davis came increasingly to rely. This was especially true after 1915 when Davis was accidentally poisoned by fumes from a gas fire, leaving him permanently incapacitated. Cowell actually executed many windows to Davis's designs, and this triptych in St Matthew's is one of them. Cowell lived nearby in Cotterill Road, and later installed a version of the central Virgin and Child design in his own home studio.

The design of the Clayton window is similar to a painting held by the Stained Glass Museum in Ely, reflecting the fact that Davis re-used his designs or allowed Cowell to do so. The light from the star above the Virgin's head is a typical feature of Davis's work, as is the style of lettering in the dedications below. Like other Pre-Raphaelites, Davis uses symbols such as ivy, a wheatsheaf and the snake's head fritillary, all of which have meanings connected with resurrection and the defeat of evil. The lantern may perhaps be a homage to Holman Hunt, whose 'Light of the World' of 1851 was in part painted very near here at the former gunpowder mills at Worcester Park.

It is interesting that such notable craftsmen as Cowell and Thomas Tarran, the sculptor of our War Memorial, lived so close to the church (Tarran lived in Ditton Road, and was a sidesman here). They may well have been working in the church at around the same time, each no doubt pleased to have such a short distance to travel to work!

Louis Davis (1860-1941). Design for a stained glass window for St Matthew's Church, Surbiton, c.1920. Collection of The Stained Glass Museum, Ely (ELYGM:2008.12). Image reproduced with permission.



Left:

Davis's original design for the central panel of the triptych, as found at the Stained Glass Museum in Ely Cathedral, and

Right:

The design as made for St Matthew's by Cowell



2. The East Windows

When St Matthew's was consecrated in 1875 the large East window (or North-east in this case) contained a collection of panels made from designs by the Victorian artist Henry Holiday. All five sets of windows were filled with coloured glass, so the Sanctuary would have been darker than it appears today. At this time Holiday was the principal designer for James Powell & Sons, who made the other original windows for the church, so he would have been the obvious choice for the important East window.

On 23rd June 1944 a V1 flying bomb landed on 191-193 Ewell Road, destroying both houses, and the blast from the explosion damaged the East windows beyond repair. It also caused the large cracks in the Sanctuary wall which are still clearly visible. The damage was patched up, and in keeping with the rather stoical attitude of the time was scarcely mentioned in the church's Annual Report for 1944. The temporary repairs were in place until 1947, when plain glass was put in. In 1950 new windows were proposed, and they were finally installed in 1953.

The artist commissioned for the task was Hugh Easton, a well-established designer who created many post-war replacements for windows lost due to enemy action. His most important commission up to this point was a substantial set of windows for Westminster Abbey between 1947 and 1950, including the famous Battle of Britain window. Those windows bear his maker's mark, a weather vane with the name H. EASTON and a cockerel on the top. This can also be seen in the bottom right corner of the right-hand window here. The Vicar at the time, Canon Roy Chamberlain, later recalled that the Diocesan Faculty Committee asked for alterations in the proposed designs and that Easton took a very dim view of criticisms made by a body of "lay know-alls". The designs were not altered!



The central panel features the four Evangelists, with Luke and Matthew still showing the tools of their former occupations, doctor and tax-collector respectively. Between them are two round designs based on the Gospel crucifixion accounts. On the left, the crown of thorns surrounds the pillar to which Jesus was tied to be whipped, the three nails from the cross, the hammer used to drive them in, and the pliers that removed them after his death. On the right, the 30 pieces of silver paid to Judas for the betrayal surround the cross, the spear, the sponge on a stick and the three dice with which the soldiers gambled for Jesus' clothes. In the circular tracery above are three symbols of the Trinity: on the left an orb for God the Father, in the middle a bread wafer and cup from Holy Communion for God the Son, and on the right a dove, as seen at Jesus' baptism, for God the Holy Spirit.

The following additional notes come from a description of the windows at the time they were installed in 1953: 'In the other windows there are supporting figures of those who first carried the Good News of God's love in Christ to their fellow men. On the left Andrew, who first brought Peter, his brother, to Christ (John 1:41); and Philip, who introduced the Grecian Jews to Jesus before Holy Week (John 12:20), Timothy, the young bishop (1 Tim 1:18), and Paul, the wise master builder of the early Church (1 Cor 3:10). On the right John the Baptist, who diverted his own disciples from himself to 'the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world' (John 1:29) and Peter, the preacher of the first sermon after the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:14). Then Stephen, who first gave his life for Christ (Acts 7:60) and Barnabas, the good man whose care for the younger generation welcomed Saul and kept John Mark within the Church, so making possible the writing of the first gospel. (Acts 15:39)'

3. The Caporn Memorial Window (Stewardship Window)

This window was installed in 1970 in memory of a former Churchwarden, F.R. “Bobs” Caporn (the extra ‘s’ presumably due to his second name being Roberts) who died in April 1964, and of his wife Marjorie who had died the previous year. The couple were very well-liked and it was no surprise that Canon Martin - the Vicar at the time - proposed a memorial to them, especially as Mr Caporn had been Vicar’s Warden (i.e. chosen by the Vicar) for several years and worked closely with him.

The long period between the proposal of a memorial window in July 1965 and its realisation in March 1970 shows that the commissioning process was fraught with delays and difficulties. The artist first approached for the task, John Hayward, prepared a design which met with the approval of the PCC and the Caporns’ two sons. However in July 1966 the Diocesan Advisory Committee turned down the design, for reasons that remain unclear. Unlike the case of Hugh Easton and the St Matthew’s East window, the artist’s wishes did not prevail and an alternative artist was sought.

Eventually W. T. Carter Shapland (1927-1972), an important post-war designer of similar stature to Hayward who had had major commissions in Chester and Peterborough Cathedrals, was chosen. Carter Shapland was well known to the Diocese, having created the large West window for the rebuilt St Mark’s Surbiton in 1960, and his design was approved early in 1968. Like Thomas Cowell who made the Clayton window, Carter Shapland lived not very far from the church, in Thames Ditton, and had previously lived in the parish in Tolworth Park Road whilst working on the St Mark’s window.

The PCC asked for the window to be installed on the North side of the church, but Carter Shapland was insistent that it should be on the South side to show

the colours to their best effect, and the daytime sun does indeed create a quite beautiful kaleidoscope of colour within the building. Unfortunately the artist suffered a heart attack early in 1969, which delayed the project still further. This was probably an early indication of the problems that caused Carter Shapland's early death in 1972 at the age of only 45. The window we see here is almost certainly the last he completed.

By October 1969 Canon Martin was able to report that Carter Shapland hoped to have the window finished within a month, and in November it was finally installed in good time for the dedication service on 15th March 1970. The service was the culmination of St Matthews' Stewardship Renewal Campaign, highly appropriate given the Caporns' close involvement with the Stewardship initiative in the early 1960s.

A leaflet was written at the time of the dedication by Canon Martin explaining the images depicted in the window, and is reproduced on the back page of this booklet. The window is the work of an artist at the height of his powers, whose early death was a considerable loss both to the art world and the Church.



4. The Quarry Windows

When St Matthew's was built in 1875, all the windows apart from the East window were made in the same style (this was many years before the installation of the windows previously described). They consisted mainly of pre-stamped diamond-shaped pieces of glass known as 'quarries', which were a speciality of the manufacturers James Powell & Sons, also known as Whitefriars Glass. James Powell (1774-1840) transformed a small long-established glassworks into one of the world's largest stained glass manufacturers, creating new ideas and techniques. One of these was decorative quarry glass, mass-produced by moulding and printing rather than by the traditional method of hand-cutting and painting. The rapid expansion of church-building in the mid-Victorian period led to Powell's products being in great demand.

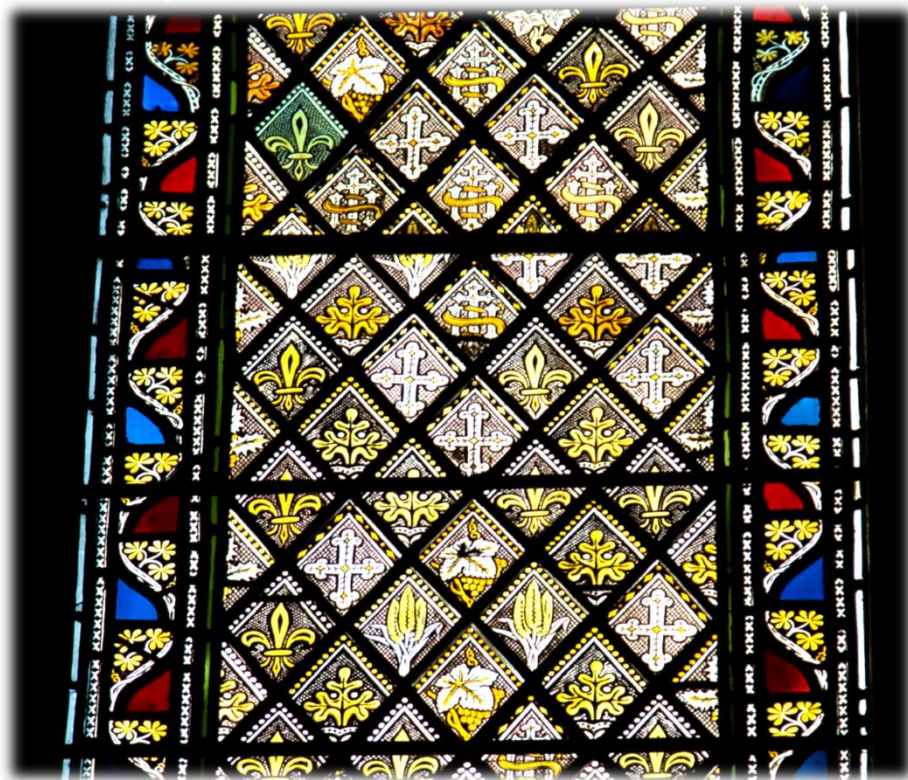
By 1875 the use of quarries was declining as many churches began to use more figurative art in their stained glass, thanks to both the Anglo-Catholic Oxford Movement and the Arts and Crafts Movement spearheaded by William Morris. The fact that St Matthew's was designed with such extensive quarry windows reflects William Coulthurst's evangelicalism, and hence reluctance to have figures of saints and angels or religious icons in the windows (Holiday's East windows showed scenes from the life of Christ and were thus permissible!) It also reflects the speed – almost haste – with which the church was built. Powell's manufacturing process meant that the many hundreds of quarries needed for St Matthew's could be produced both rapidly and cheaply. Nevertheless these windows have a classical elegance thanks to the highly decorative roundels that each one contains, particularly fine in the large West window (to the left of the main entrance) and the North and South transept windows.

All the original quarry windows to some extent show signs of the ravages of storm and bomb damage during the 20th century. The lower window on the North side of the nave has been extensively patched with strips of lead to cover

cracks in the quarries, and the perimeter glass in the top right panel of the North transept window has been repaired with glass of a much lighter blue than the original. This may be because immediately after World War 2 it was difficult to acquire coloured glass, so that in repairing this window (almost certainly damaged by the flying bomb that destroyed the East window) the craftsmen had to use the nearest colour available.

Nor were the windows particularly durable, even in relatively early days. In December 1921 the Vicar at the time, Rev. J. Clifford Banham, had to apologise in the parish magazine for the fact that part of the West window had had to be removed for re-glazing just before a Sunday morning when the heating failed: "Sunday, November 13th, was a memorable one! A bitterly cold day, large gaps in the West window, and no hot water in the pipes!" A feeling perhaps familiar to later congregations too...

The connection between St Matthew's and Powell's is all the stronger thanks to the fact that both Louis Davis and Thomas Cowell, who designed and made the Clayton Memorial (Nativity) window were employed by the company, as was Henry Holiday who designed the original East window.



This window, which was dedicated on 15th March 1970, is in memory of a former Vicar's Warden and his wife, 'Bobs' and Marjorie Caporn, both of whom were actively involved in the early years of Christian Stewardship in the Parish.

Consequently the theme of the window, which was conceived and planned by Canon Martin, then Vicar of St. Matthew's, is Christian Stewardship. Indeed, it is believed to be the only window of its kind in existence.

Our window tells the story of Our Lord's Feeding of the Five Thousand. In the right-hand light the little boy has been brought to Jesus by St. Andrew and has just given our Lord his five loaves and two fishes. Giving is the theme of this right-hand light, reminding us that generous, realistic, regular, sacrificial giving, as God has given for us, is one aspect of the Stewardship ideal.

In the centre light our Lord is praying. He stands with the loaves and fishes in His hands and prays for God's blessing upon the giver and upon those who shall receive the gift. Taking time to pray, privately and in public, is the second great theme of the Stewardship ideal.

In the left-hand light, an attempt has been made by the artist to translate the ancient gospel story into the Twentieth Century. Instead of depicting the disciples distributing the food to the hungry multitude, he has designed a modern hospital nurse, wearing the uniform of Surbiton General Hospital and caring for three children.

The theme behind the left-hand light is service - the willingness to use whatever ability or talent or training we possess in the service of any neighbour who needs our help.

GIVING, PRAYING, SERVICE - the three great activities of dedicated, committed Christian discipleship - are the foundation upon which Stewardship rests.



Left:
Canon Martin's
description of
the Caporn
Window in 1970
(see p.8-9)

St Matthew's Church

St Matthew's Avenue

Surbiton KT6 6JQ

020 8390 5121

www.stmatthewskt6.org