

Pre-Dissolution-Stained Glass in Cornwall

This month we are delighted to publish a pioneering gazetteer of pre-Dissolution glass in England's most south westerly county: Cornwall. In the early 16th century, the Cornish church included six monasteries, two friaries, three collegiate churches, some hospitals and 209 parishes or parish – like areas, together with numerous chapels, some linked to private houses. There are over 215 ecclesiastical medieval buildings or sites.

We are extremely grateful to Dr Joanna Mattingly, a specialist on Cornish churches and a member of the Truro Diocesan Advisory Committee, and to Michael G. Swift, the stained-glass advisor to the Truro Diocesan Advisory Committee, for kindly allowing us to publish a copy of their important gazetteer which lists forty-nine public sites in the county with early glass, far more than previously thought. In all cases, the location of the windows and some indication of their subject-matter, where known, are given. Illustrations of some of the glass can be found in the Picture Archive of the [CVMA website](#).

Introduction

Although our survey for the Truro Diocesan Advisory Committee found traces of medieval glazing in nearly fifty Cornish churches (or just under a quarter of the total), only three now contain complete pre-Dissolution windows: St Neot, St Kew and St Winnow. In view of the importance of these windows, some brief introductory words might be helpful.

The most impressive scheme is at St Neot which contains significant remains of its original glazing. The earliest window (remains of the east window appears to date from the early to mid-15th century. Further windows were glazed as funds were raised including the Old Testament windows which date from the 1480s or very early 1490s. The rest of the south aisle windows at St Neot are from the 1500s–10s, while the north aisle was glazed during the 1520s and early 1530s (on the basis of three of the last windows there being dated 1528–30).

The St Kew Passion of Christ window probably date from the 1480s or very early 1490s. A Jesse window in the south chapel may also date from the 15th century. The St Winnow's window can be assigned to the 1460s.

All these glazing schemes were part of a major rebuilding/refurbishment campaign which transformed the appearance of Cornish churches during the 15th and 16th centuries. St Kew seems to have been finished around 1500 while St Neot was still being completed as the Reformation unfolded. Surprisingly in view of the comparatively early date (in a Cornish context) of its south chapel, St Winnow was left unfinished (it still retains its north transept of 13th or 14th century date). Of these churches, the glazing schemes at St Neot most closely reflect the pattern of enlargement of many Cornish churches. Documents show that short gaps between projects allowed for recovery before a fresh surge of fund-raising. Documentary evidence suggests that most of Cornwall's medieval windows probably survived the Reformation with just a few faces and controversial images being removed. Major iconoclasm was delayed until the third Civil War period – 1650–1 – when Parliamentary soldiers went on a well-documented glass-breaking spree. Eighteenth century neglect and Victorian restorations led to further losses, while choice fragments were also given to visiting antiquarians. Information about lost glass has been largely ignored here.

Joanna Mattingly and Michael G. Swift

Gazetteer

Altarnun: St Nonna

* 1. Chancel, east: tracery – St John the Evangelist (from Crucifixion).

Blisland: Sts Protus and Hyacinth

* n2. North chancel, chapel: east tracery – three rosettes.

Boyton: Holy Name

* 1. Chancel, east: 19th century medley window with six medieval fragments.

Breage: St Breaca

- * s2. South chapel, south: tracery – head of donor?
- * s4. South transept, east: tracery – fragments.
- * North transept, north: tracery – head.

Cothele: St Dominic

- * 1. Chancel, east: Annunciation in tracery, Crucifixion and armorials.
- * South nave, 1: St Anne (teaching Virgin to read), St Catherine.

Creed: St Crida

- * 1. Chancel, east: tracery – Christ's hand pierced by nail, fragment of crown, crown of thorns.
- * s2. South chapel, east: tracery – soldier awoken at the Tomb.
- * s3. South chapel south, 1: tracery – eagle on gold shield.
- * s4. South chapel south, 2: tracery – armorial.
- * s5. South aisle, 1: tracery – three figures, two at prayer.
- * s6. South aisle, 2: tracery – winged ox of St Luke.
- * s7. South aisle, 3: tracery – foliate and canopy work; finch with chain of office.

Davidstow: St David

- * Tower, west: four armorial fragments.

Egloskerry: St Keria

- * s2. South aisle, east: tracery – Holy Trinity?

Fowey: St Finbarrus

- * North aisle, 1: Agony in Gethsemane (transferred from Rashleigh Town House).

Golant: St Sampson

- * North aisle, 1: Sts Antony and James the Great, plus fragments

Goran: St Goranus

- * South aisle, east: tracery – head of apostle or Christ

Helland: St Helena

- * s2. South aisle, east: tracery – including sacred monogram and arms of Giffard and Heale.

Lamorran: St Morren

- * s2. South transept, east: medley window of various fragments, including part of Golgotha and coat of arms.

Landulph: St's Leonard and Dilph

- * s3. South chapel, east: armorial, Lower family – 17th century?
- * s4. South chapel, south: armorial.

Laneast: St's Sidwell and Gulvat

Fig. 1. Head of unknown figure, Laneast.

* 1. Chancel, east: tracery and central light – part of crucifixion, tracery fragments of roses and crowns, unidentified face. [Fig. 1]

* s2. Chancel, south: St Christopher, St Etheldreda of Ely. South aisle tracery – roses.

Lanivet: Parish church, dedication unknown

* n3. North chapel, 2: tracery – fragments and sacred monogram.

* n2. North chapel, 1: tracery – coats of arms.

Lanivet: St Benet's chapel

* Tower: three armorials including Chiverton arms.

Lanlivery: St Brevita

* s5. South nave: tracery – rosette.

Lanteglos-by-Camelford: St Julitta



Fig. 2. St Bartholomew, Lanteglos-by-Camelford

* n2. Chancel north: armorial, head of St Christopher, grapes.

* s3. South nave: tracery – Solomon and St Mary Salome; Joachim and Joanna.

* s4. South nave: tracery – St's Peter, James the Great and Andrew. [Fig. 2]

* s6. South nave: tracery – St's Jude and Bartholomew.

* s7. South nave: tracery – vine leaves and grapes, including St Luke emblem.

Lanteglos-by-Fowey: St Wyllow

* South aisle, east: Annunciation Coronation of Blessed Virgin Mary, rose.

Launceston: St Thomas

* South aisle, east: arms of Launceston priory.

* Also, main light of border of crowns and tracery white roses.

Linkinhorne: St Melor

* n2. North aisle, east: tracery – rose.

* n3. North aisle, 1: tracery: three roses, crown.

* s4. South aisle: God the Father.

Luxulyan: St's Circius and Julitta

* w1. Tower: tracery and central lights fragments; left and right lights armorials.

Michaelstow: St Michael

* n2. North aisle, east: tracery – head of BVM?

Minster: St Merteriana

* Tower, west: Trelawny arms.

Morwenstow: St John the Baptist.

* n2. North aisle, east: tracery – sacred monogram?

Mullion: St Melina

* Tower, west: fragments.

Poundstock: St Neot



Fig. 3. Canopy work at Poundstock.

* n3. North chapel, north: canopy work, including Luke's symbol.

* s3. South transept, east: tracery – canopy work. [Fig. 3]

Rialton manor

* Two roundels: arms of Priory of Bodmin and Thomas Vivian's initials.

Royal Cornwall Museum: see Truro

Quethiock: St Hugo

* n4. North aisle: tracery – Annunciation.

St Blazey: St Blaise

* Tower, west: St Blaise in centre light; tracery – roundels of chalice and host, animal with chain round neck.

St Breocke: St Breock

* South aisle, 5: tracery – BVM Annunciation and inscription.

St Enoder: St Enoder

* Southeast: head of female saint, sacred monogram and armorial.

St Kew: St James



Fig. 4. The Betrayal, St Kew. © Holy Well Glass



Fig. 5. Christ carrying the cross, St Kew. © Holy Well glass.

- * 1. Chancel, east: tracery – roundels of St’s Michael, Lawrence and two bishops; tracery – sacred monograms and crowns with roses.
- * n3. North chapel, east: twelve episodes of the Passion, Nativity and donor figures; tracery armorials of Pentire, Carminow and Bere. [Figs. 4 and 5]
- * n5. North aisle, 2: tracery – angels with symbols of evangelists.
- * s3. South chapel, east: Jesse section, sacred monograms, saint with staff, sacred monograms, figure in tabard, sacred monograms; tracery eight angels.
- * s4. South chapel, south, 1: tracery – three armorials, arms of Arundell, Bishop of Exeter and Lanhargy?
- * s5. South chapel, south, 2: tracery – rose and angel with Agnus Dei.

St Keyne: St Kayna

- * n2. North chapel, east: tracery two armorials.

St Maby: St Mebena

- * s2. South aisle, east tracery – Green Man/grotesque face.
- * s4. South aisle, 2: tracery – angel face
- * s5. South aisle, 3: tracery – foliate.
- * s6. South aisle, 4: tracery – angel face.
- * s7. South aisle, 5: tracery – angel face.

St Martin-by-Looe: St Martin

- * s2. South chapel, east: tracery – roses and crown.

St Mellion: St Mellanus

- * 1. Chancel east: tracery – rose, bishop, St Peter.

St Neot: St Neot



Fig. 6. Female donor, St Neot. © YF Pictures

- * 1. Chancel, east: tracery – arms of Valletort and Luccombe. Annunciation and two female saints.
- * n2. North aisle, east: tracery – Crowning of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and St’s Catherine and Barbara.
- * n4. North aisle, 1: St’s John the Baptist, Gregory, Leonard and Andrew; Harys (glazier) and possibly Courtney and other glazier donor figures.
- * n5. North aisle, 2: St Mabena, Blessed Virgin Mary, Christ, St Meubred; ‘Wives of the western part of the parish’ donor figures. 1528.
- * n6. North aisle, 3: St’s Petroc, Clair, Manac, God holding napkin of souls (All Souls or All Saints); ‘Sisters’ donor figures. 1529. [Fig. 6]
- * n7. North aisle, 4: twelve scenes of the life of St Neot. Given by ‘Young men’ of parish. 1530.
- * n8. North aisle, west: twelve scenes of the life of St George.
- * s2. South chapel, east: fifteen scenes of the Creation. Tracery nine orders of the angelic host.
- * s3. South chapel, south, 1: eight scenes of Noah of an original 12.
- * s4. South chapel, south, 2: St’s Christopher, Neot, Leonard, Catherine, and sacred monograms and armorials. Borlase donor figures; tracery – crown and sun borders.

- * s5. South aisle, 1: Blessed Virgin Mary, Crucifixion, Sts John the Evangelist and Stephen, with donor figures; tracery – crown and sun borders. s6. South Aisle 2: St's Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Tracery – chalice.
- * s7. South aisle, 3: St's Lalluw, German, John the Evangelist and Stephen, with Callaway and Tubbe donor figures; tracery – St John the Evangelist, Risen Christ, St James the Great. Tracery – Annunciation and Holy Spirit.
- * s8. South aisle, 4: Sts Peter, Paul, Christ and James.

St Teath: St Thetha

- * 1. Chancel, east: Passion instruments – spear, wounds, sacred heart.
- * n3. North aisle: tracery – armorials.
- * n6. North aisle: tracery – armorials.
- * s4. South aisle: tracery – fragments.
- * s5. South aisle: fragments.
- * s6. South aisle: tracery – Passion – cross, ladder, spear, post, crown of thorns, lantern.

St Tudy: St Tudius

- * 1. Chancel, east: tracery – John's symbol, sacred monogram, face.
- * s2. South chapel, east: tracery – chalice and roses.

St Winnow: St Winnow



Fig. 7. The Virgin and child, St Winnow.

- * 1. Chancel, east: Crucifixion with Blessed Virgin Mary and St John.
- * s2. South aisle, east: Tracery arms of Kayle, Archdekne and Courtenay and. Sts George, Blessed Virgin Mary and Child, Sts Christopher, Michael, bishop saint, St Mary Magdalene, Blessed Virgin Mary (from Annunciation), Sts Winnow?, and Leonard; donor figures of Courtenay and Archdekne. [Fig. 7]

Shevioc: Blessed Virgin Mary

- * n2. North chapel, east tracery – BVM head and Courtenay arms?

Sithney: St Sithney



Fig. 8. Unidentified head, Sithney

- * s2. South aisle, east: arms of Penrose – 17th century?
- * s4. South aisle, 2: heads only of angel, Gabriel, Blessed Virgin Mary, bishop and two others. [Fig. 8]

South Petherwin: St Paternus

- * s3. South chapel, south: tracery – Tregadock and Tremayne arms, and empty shield.

Trelowarren: chapel



Fig. 9. Armorial, Trelowarren.

* n1., n2., s1., s2.: tracery – roundels of Vivian arms from Rialton. [Fig. 9]

Truro Cathedral: Blessed Virgin Mary chapel

* St Mary's aisle, 8: tracery – fragments including head.

* St Mary's aisle, 11: tracery – fragments.

* St Mary's aisle, 12: tracery – Agnus Dei.

Truro: Royal Cornwall Museum

* Two panels from St Neot: Warning to Sabbath Breakers and St Mary Salome.

Withiel: St Clement

* s2. Lady Chapel, east: tracery – Vivian arms.

Further Reading

* G.E. Doble, 'Medieval Stained Glass in Cornwall and Brittany', *Journal of the British Society of Master Glass Painters* 4 (4), 1932, pp. 183–86

* J. Pike Hedgeland, A description accompanied by sixteen coloured plates, of the splendid decorations recently made to the church of St. Neot, in Cornwall, at the sole expense of the Reverend Richard Gerveys Grylls, published in 1830, Printed for J.P. Hedgeland (London)

* R. Marks, *Stained Glass in England during the Middle Ages*, London and Toronto, 1993

* J. Mattingly, 'Stories in the Glass – Reconstructing the St Neot Pre-Reformation Glazing Scheme' in *Royal Institution of Cornwall Journal* (JRIC) New Series, 3, 2000, pp. 9–55 and 'A Tin Miner and a Bal Maiden – further research on the St Neot windows' JRIC 2001, pp. 96–100

* J. Mattingly, *Looking at Cornish Churches*, Redruth, 2005

* J. Mattingly, 'Pre-Reformation saints' cults in Cornwall – with particular reference to the St Neot windows', in J. Cartwright (ed.), *Celtic Hagiography and Saints' Lives*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003, pp. 249–70

* N. Orme, *Cornwall and the Cross: Christianity 500–1560*, Victoria County History publication, Chichester, 2007