

COMMEMORATING
600 YEARS

**THE
EAST
WINDOWS**



**THE COMPANY OF
MERCHANT TAYLORS
IN THE CITY OF YORK**



CONCORDIA PARVA RES CRESCUNT

1415-2015

Medieval to Millennial

2014 was a momentous year for the Company of Merchant Taylors in the City of York. A major dendrochronological investigation of the roof timbers of their Great Hall was published, establishing its build date as 1415, the year of the Battle of Agincourt.

Determining this date inspired the Company to celebrate and commemorate the Great Hall's 600th anniversary.

The members sought to leave an enduring legacy of the anniversary celebrations; a gift from this generation to the Company, their magnificent hall, and to future generations of Taylors.

Threads of an Idea

A 600th Anniversary Permanent Legacy steering group was formed to gather ideas for a project and to act on the wishes of the wider membership.

At that time, surprisingly, the Company's coat of arms was missing from the Great Hall and the idea of incorporating the arms into the fabric of the building using stained glass quickly gained considerable support.

Award-winning stained glass artist and designer Helen Whittaker MA AMGP had worked previously with the Company, revising and resetting the Henry Gyles window in the Little Hall.

She and Keith Barley MBE of Barley Studio in Dunnington were approached to consult and quote on the project.



Sketching out a Pattern

The Company's plans for the project quickly developed into installing a stained glass design into the three windows on the east wall of the Great Hall.

The central, arched window would depict the Company's coat of arms and the dates 1415 and 2015. Stained glass panels, designed to complement the coat of arms window, would be installed in the rectangular windows on either side, unifying the three windows into one spectacular scheme.

Backlighting was then to be installed behind the window bearing the coat of arms, allowing it to be viewed in the hours of darkness.



The Design Vision

The Merchant Taylors' arms are displayed in the Little Hall and on the entrance porch pediment but were not previously displayed in the Great Hall. Over the fireplace in the Great Hall are the arms of the London Company of Drapers, installed to mark the union of the York Tailors and York Drapers as the Company of Merchant Taylors in the City of York in 1662.

On the east wall above the windows are the Stuart royal arms, carved by Dick Reid in 1962 to mark the 300th anniversary of the granting of the Company's charter in 1662.

My design encompasses all three windows in the east end of the Great Hall, creating a strong and bold backdrop on entering the room.

In the central window, the Merchant Taylors' coat of arms creates the focal point, depicted as if sewn onto silk, and



at a size complementing that of the royal arms on the gable wall above.

The surrounding fabric flows across the remaining glazing and into the flanking windows, embedding the coat of arms into the fabric of the building.

The anniversary dates, 1415 - 2015, are shown embroidered in gold thread below the coat of arms, with a silver needle, bottom right, finishing the stitching.



Lines of gold stitching running across the fabric hint at the skill of Tailors through the ages, working with the fabric to create a garment.

The design and techniques of the new window follow in the footsteps of a window created by the noted York stained glass artist Henry Gyles in 1662, which is now installed in the Little Hall. In 2008 the Gyles window was conserved by Barley Studio and re-installed with a newly designed commemorative inscription panel.

The new east windows follow the style of the Gyles window with their glazing pattern of rectangular squares, and no

coloured glass is used. The coat of arms is created using glass paints, coloured enamels and silver yellow and copper ruby stains applied onto kiln-distorted clear float glass, while the surrounding fabric is created from clear white and tinted antique glasses (Glashütte Lamberts).

Bringing the design forward to the present day are the contemporary setting of abstracted silk and the sculptural elements of the needle and thread, formed in tinned copper and brass, and 'sewn' onto the window.

Helen Whittaker MA AMAG

Fundraising

In September 2015, the Company gathered to hear an inspirational presentation from Helen Whittaker and Keith Barley, sharing their design vision for the new windows.

An appeal for funds to deliver this vision followed. The response of Company members, widows of past members and families was magnificent, with the fund fully subscribed within a matter of weeks. The project would, quite simply, have failed without their extraordinary generosity.

By January 2016, the Company was in a position to commission Helen Whittaker and Barley Studio to design, build and install the 600th Anniversary Windows.



Protecting the Fabric



The Company appointed Andrew Boyce of Ferrey & Mennim Chartered Architects to supervise the building project.

Surveys of the stonework surrounding the windows revealed that remedial work was required before the new windows could be installed.



Matthias Garn (Master Mason) and his team were the natural choice to carry out this essential work and they coordinated closely with Barley Studio before and during the installation.



Despite an already heavy workload due to the refurbishment of the Hall and Alms Houses, the Fabric Committee under its chair Graham Wilford played a pivotal role in the windows project.

The Installation

The Great Hall is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and any work carried out on its fabric is subject to intense scrutiny. Richard Carr-Archer (Hon. Architect) worked extensively with Historic England to gain the necessary permissions for the work to begin.

A condition of the project's approval was the commissioning of a programme of building recording before and during the development.

To fulfil this responsibility the Company appointed Historic Buildings Archaeologist Colin Briden. His detailed report now forms part of the Company's archive for future generations to use and study, and which is available to anyone with an interest in this unique building.





The glass removed from the side windows on the east wall was originally presented to the Company by Charles Whewey in 1963, his Mastership year.

Richard Whewey, his son and a Past Master himself, kindly sponsored the relocation of this glass to the windows on the Great Hall's north side.



A separate fund was launched to utilise the geometrically shaped glass from the original arched east window, together with a depiction of Taylors' accoutrements, in the window in the entrance hall.







An Extraordinary Collaboration

All those involved with the 600th Anniversary Windows project took enormous pride in their contribution and in the project itself, working in an atmosphere of limitless goodwill and camaraderie.

The project was an exemplary collaboration between members and their partners and families, past members' widows, craftspeople, professionals and artists, to create a lasting, twenty-first century link to the Great Hall's medieval past.

The 600th Anniversary Permanent Legacy steering group comprised Ian Black, Richard Carr-Archer (Hon. Architect), Andrew Grace (Master 2015-2016), June Hargreaves, David Miller (Master 2014-2015 & Project Chair), Robert Porter (Master 2016-2017), Alan Scott, Richard Taylor (Clerk to the Company) and Graham Wilford (Fabric Committee Chair). All are privileged to have been part of this hugely enjoyable project.

The 600th Anniversary Windows were unveiled officially by Dame Judi Dench CH DBE FRSA, actress, author and daughter of York, at a ceremony in April 2017; an occasion that proved to be a fitting and memorable celebration of an extraordinary project.







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