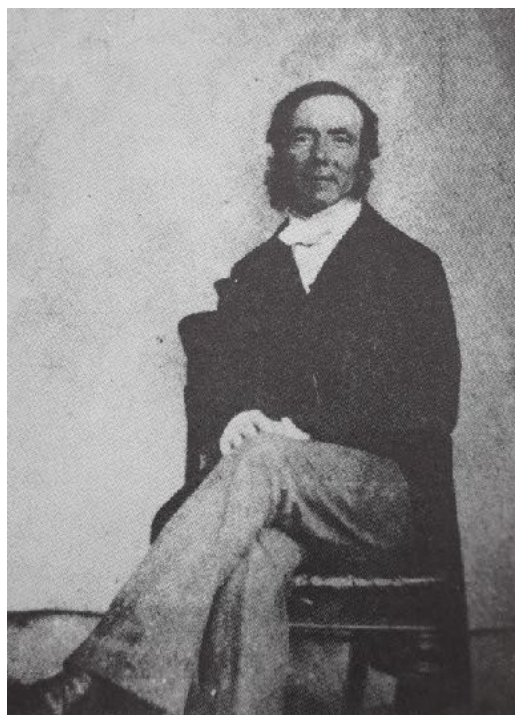


MIKE DEEMING WRITES:

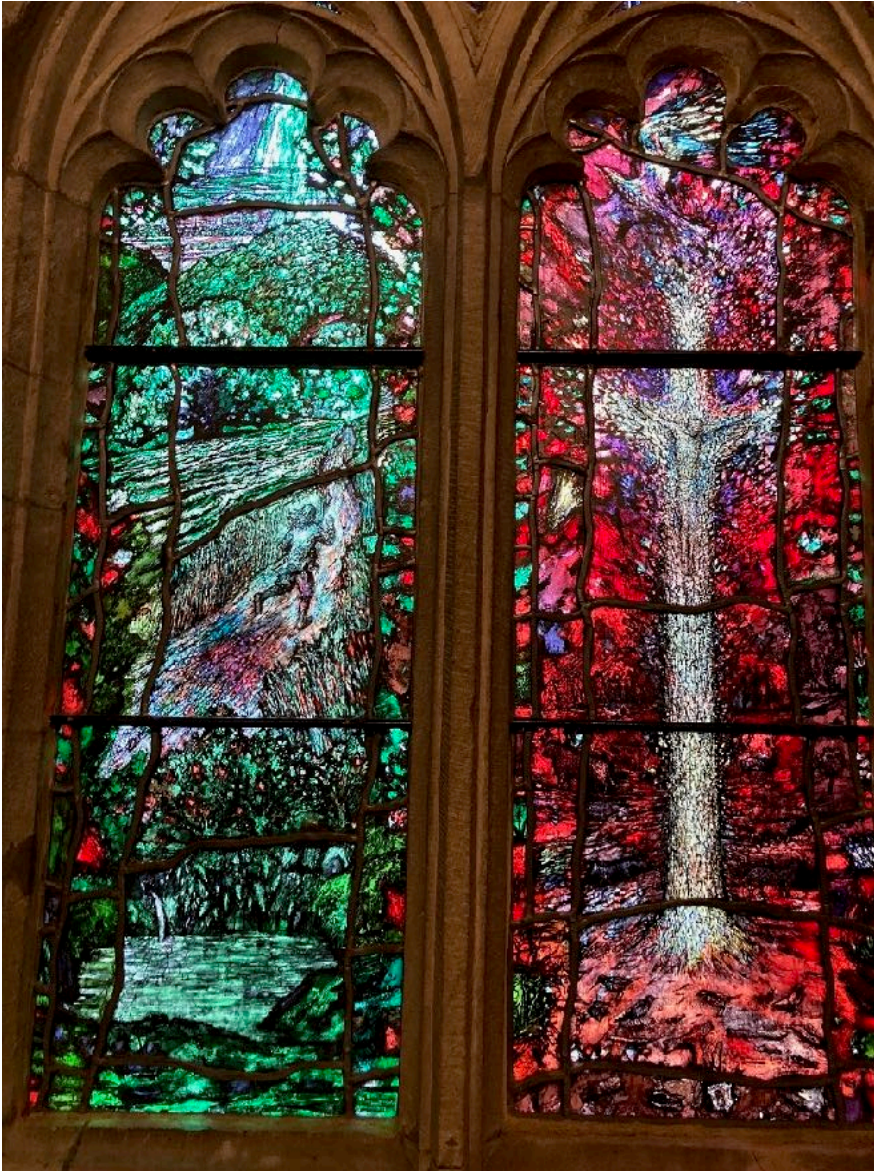
Distraught at being jilted, it was said that the heiress Maria Langstone thereafter agreed to marry the first eligible and suitable bachelor that she met. Thus it was in 1840 that the Rev Anthony Huxtable (1808 – 1883), pictured here, stepped into the breach, taking her as his new bride back to his parish church of St Bartholomew, Sutton Waldron, North Dorset. The village thrived on farming and the making of linen buttons. He had been vicar there since 1834 and when Maria duly inherited a fortune, the first thing they did was to reconstruct the Old Rectory. They bought two large farms, to indulge his scientific interest in farming; there he carried out extensive experiments over the decades on how to enhance crop yields and, in particular, on the effects of using liquid sewage as a fertiliser! He became a key member of the Chemical Committee of the Royal Agricultural Society of England and wrote numerous articles for its journal.



The next item on the agenda was a new church for their parish, and the resulting gothic revival masterpiece, dedicated in 1847, was described by John Betjeman as “one of the most lovely examples of Victorian architecture”. It is the masterwork of the architect George Alexander and the outstanding internal decorations are by Owen Jones, using tiles designed by Augustus Pugin. Huxtable was appointed Archdeacon of Dorset in 1862 but, sadly, ill-health forced him to give this up after only nine months. He was made Prebendary of Torleton, and sat in the Cathedral quire stall bearing that name, alongside the stall of the Canon Precentor. Maria died in 1874 and the next year he married the widow Susannah Gott, who on his death in 1883 set up the Huxtable Memorial Charity which supports the poor in the parish to this day. She also commissioned a Clayton and Bell window for the Cathedral in his memory, installed in the north quire aisle as near as possible to the Torleton stall.

Torleton (now called ‘Tarlton’, though I suspect it sounds the same in a West Country accent!) is a hamlet in the Rodmarton parish in Gloucestershire. The manor was given as a prebend to the Cathedral around 1142 and confirmed by King Henry II in 1158. The early twelfth century, Grade-2-listed St Osmund Chapel was restored in 1875 and retains its fine Norman font. In 1997 four windows were added at the east end, designed by the Dorset-based glazier, Thomas Denny. Denny is now one of the most highly regarded stained glass artists in England with numerous works in cathedrals and churches across the country. He is pictured here working on windows for Sunderland Minster. He aims to promote the public perception of stained glass as an art form – he said in a 2006 article in the magazine *Dorset Life* - ‘..stained glass is





not always recognised as part of the art world, although stained glass windows are some of our most ambitious public works of art. Not many artists (John Piper is an exception) have bridged the gap between painting and stained glass in the public's mind."

Whilst the Cathedral window is modest, I like to think that Huxtable is commemorated too in the outstanding Denny windows in Tarlton and the extraordinary secular windows in Sutton Waldron.

Ed: You know my love for connections - I couldn't resist including the wonderful pic left which is one of Denny's windows for the Audley Chantry in Hereford Cathedral. Image courtesy of Thomas Denny (website: thomasdenny.co.uk). His style reminds of the painter Samuel Palmer (1805 - 1881).

The windows are in fact to the memory of Thomas Traherne (1636 - 1674), Anglican cleric and theologian. His writings have similarities with William Blake and Gerard Manley Hopkins.