



A Salisbury-Cathedral-centric view of History.

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A PEEK THROUGH THE WINDOW CHRISTMAS QUIZ

MIKE DEEMING WRITES:

Here are six pictures taken from the Cathedral's windows to celebrate Christmas. There are two nativity scenes, two images of the 'three wise men', one of the presentation in the temple and one of St Christopher carrying the infant Jesus on his shoulder.

The questions are –

In which windows are all these images?

Why are three of these images very difficult to see?

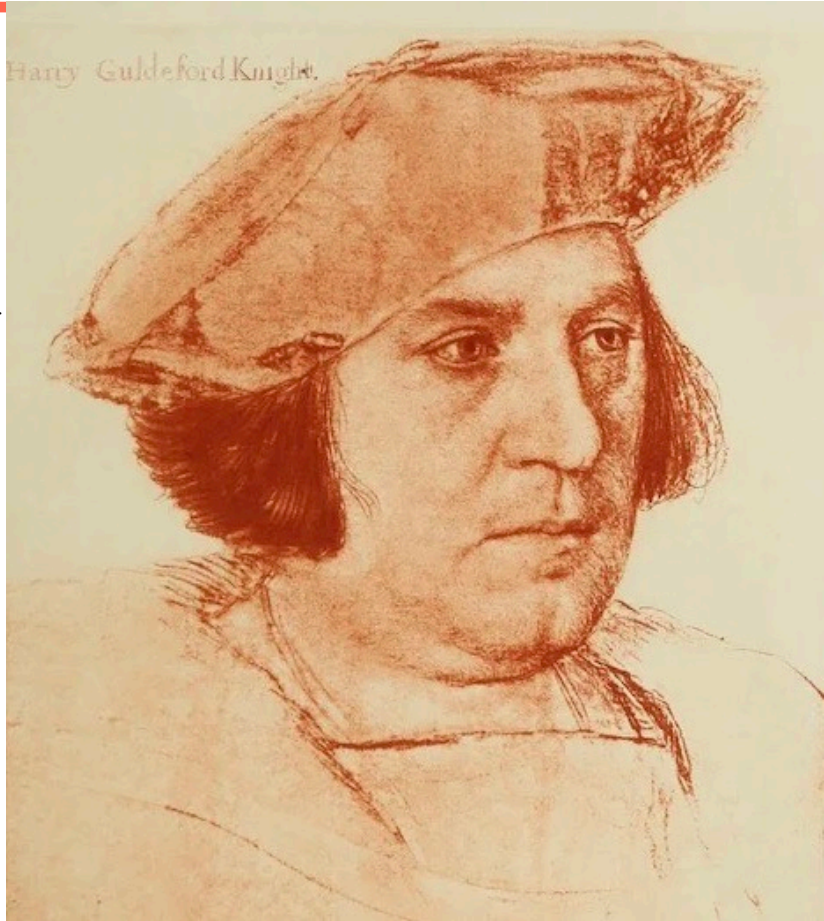
What is very special about the second 'three kings' image and the St Christopher image?

Answers on page 4.



A CARDINAL SIN?

David Sherratt writes: I am inclined to take issue with the description of Cardinal Wolsey as *disgraced*. He lost the confidence of a tyrannical King, Henry VIII, not least because of Ann Boleyn's dislike of the Papal legate but also, more obviously because his diplomatic skills failed to get the divorce from Queen Catherine of Aragon which Henry required in order to marry Ann. When push came to shove at the Queen's trial, his fellow Cardinal, the absentee Bishop of Salisbury, Campeggio, deserted him at an adjournment and fled back to Rome and the imprisoned Pope Clement, leaving Wolsey to face the music, and, ultimately a



trumped up charge of treason, i.e. failing to get the divorce. *Image Credit: George Cavendish via Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain.*

Wolsey, the *Boy Bachelor* gaining his Oxford degree at 15 was eventually recommended to King Henry VII and began his service in the Royal Court. He grew into positions of power under Royal patronage and this continued under Henry's son. Statesman, diplomat, patron of the Arts, he was particularly interested in education founding, after the fashion of medieval bishops, a College at Oxford, Cardinal College - now Christ Church - and as with Eton and Winchester, a School in Ipswich as a feeder college. On the way he amassed a vast fortune which was deployed in buildings in the latest Renaissance style, e.g. the core of present-day Hampton Court Palace. His life-style was financed by his numerous ecclesiastical appointments, bishoprics, canonries, deaneries, and the Abbacy of St Albans. He was renowned for his capacity for work as this quotation from a not-uncritical biography by his gentleman-usher George Cavendish shows: *The Cardinal sat down at four o'clock in the morning to write letters, with his Chaplain vested and waiting to say Mass, until four that afternoon without rising once to piss nor to get any meal but all that time wrote with his own hand having his nightcap on his head.*

He married off [Joan Larke] his erstwhile mistress (by whom he had a son and a daughter) considering it an inappropriate situation for the wearer of the Red Hat, was devoted to his cats which often travelled with him, and died at Leicester Abbey where his tomb, unlike Richard III's, has yet to be found. This after an horrendous journey wracked with severe dysentery as a prisoner of his King. His wealth, his fall have provided material for moral instruction on the unworthiness of wealth in sermons from many a parson, and the well-known *If I had served my God as I have served my King he would not have given me over in my gray hairs* has echoed round round the stones or bricks of many school chapels.



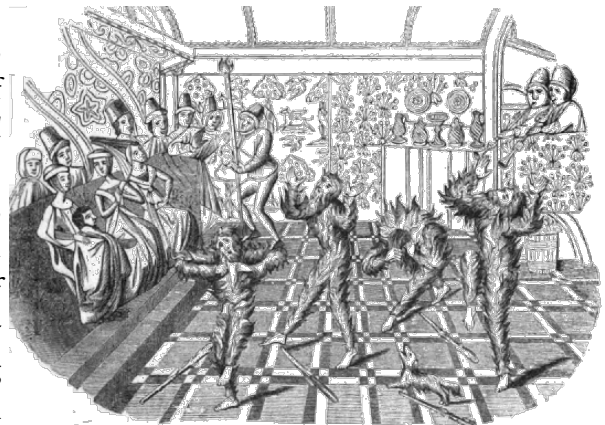
Few people are aware of Wolsey's connection with Salisbury Diocese apart from the ill-fated encounter with its absentee Bishop. As a Fellow of an Oxford College he was entitled to be ordained in any English church. No one seems to know why he chose Marlborough where in 1498 he was ordained in St Peter's (now redundant) Church by the titular Bishop Of Lydda - rich source of many a limerick.

Wolsey was born in Ipswich and founded his Grammar School there intending it to be a feeder for Cardinal College, Oxford. There is a full-sized seated statue in the medieval part of the City showing the Cardinal teaching and the sculptor made two casts of the head one of which is now in the redundant church which Thomas knew, and the other is in St Peter's redundant Church in Marlborough, along with a casting of one of Wolsey's favoured cats taken from the full-sized figure. It was said that Wolsey when sitting in Star Chamber court would have a cat seated next to him and ostensibly consulted the cat whilst considering a verdict.

A MEDIEVAL CHRISTMAS

In Mortimer's *The Time Traveller's Guide to Medieval England* (Random House 2009) might sound like an adult version of 'Horrible Histories' but it is full of fascinating facts. However, I have balanced it by also reading Martyn Whittock's *Life in the Middle Ages* (Constable & Robinson 2009).

Mortimer starts with the masked Mummers (meaning disguising) and their enactments of heroes v evils such as *the Cardinals in Rome*, *Gog and Magog* or *Robin Hood* (right). For Christmas 1338, Edward III turned them into spectacular events and placed an order for 86 plain masks, 14 masks with long beards, 15 baboon heads of linen and 12 ells of canvas to make a forest, with a pillory and a cucking stool. Carols, which were songs accompanying dancing, where the party held hands and skipped in circles, both indoors and outside.



Court Mummers. Harleian MS. 4379.

Whittock explains that between Advent and Christmas was a 4-day period of fasting. Christmas Eve was particularly holy when all meat, cheese and eggs were forbidden so fish replaced meat and no rich food was eaten. From the 25th December to 6th January was the twelve days of Christmas, one interlinked festival, including three fast days. Our Sarum Rite indicates that Christmas Day should start with a Mass followed by the reciting of Christ's genealogy, as per the Jesse Window. Candles and tapers would have been lit (darkness into light) with the largest candle being on top of the Rood Screen. So Christmas was the start of the celebrations rather than the climax.

The 26th December was St. Stephen's Day (the first Christian martyr) whilst the 27th was dedicated to St. John the Evangelist. The 28th December was Holy Innocents Day recalling



Herod's murder of the children of Bethlehem. The 1st January as well as being New Year's Day became the Feast of Christ's Circumcision (trying to block out the Viking traditions of *Yule* in the North). In frustration in 1155, New Year was moved to 25th March (Feast of the Annunciation), a date change that lasted until 1752.

Churches and houses were decorated with holly and ivy but not mistletoe. The records of the Bishop of Salisbury in 1406 refer to *games* and *disguisings*. Lords of the manor entertained their staff and tenants, who were expected to bring a contribution. The Lords themselves indulged in a good deal of eating

and drinking which the peasants could not afford to copy. And, as we know in Salisbury, role-reversal was part of the celebrations. The print above (*courtesy of medievalists.net*) shows a *Christmas-Bishop* elected on Holy Innocents Day.

QUIZ ANSWERS

Three of the images – a nativity scene (top left), a three wise men scene (lower left) and the scene of Christ's presentation in the Temple (top right) are in the south windows of the Trinity Chapel. It is these that are very difficult to see because of the scaffolding outside!

The four lancets here depict twenty scenes from the life of Christ. They were installed in 1871/2 and are in the style recommended by Charles Winston, whose 1849 paper 'On the Painted Glass at Salisbury' was the first detailed record of the Cathedral's glass. The medieval designs in these Clayton and Bell windows are easy to pick out from the image shapes and surrounding patterns.

The other nativity scene (top centre) is in the St Martin Chapel (on the east side of the Morning Chapel). It is in early C16 Germanic style and our only window by the Victorian glaziers Burlison and Grylls.

The other 'three wise men' image (bottom centre) is in the lancet to the right of the Jesse window in the south nave aisle. The St Christopher image (bottom right) is in the right lancet of the Army Air Corps anniversary window in the north nave aisle. These images are the oldest glass (pre-dating the Cathedral and probably coming from Old Sarum) and the newest glass in the Cathedral (2007), respectively, which is what makes them very special!

HAVE A GREAT CHRISTMAS

- Mark, Mike, David et al, and thank you for reading and contributing.

