

MIKE DEEMING WRITES:



1788 and 1789 were momentous years – the Bastille was stormed, the Bill of Rights (loosely based on Magna Carta) was tabled by Congress

as an amendment to the US Constitution, the British fleet established the first colony at Sydney [Ed: originally called Stingray Harbour]. In England the Regency Bill was passed to enable the Prince Regent to assume office in the face of King George III's deteriorating mental health. Against this background, James Wyatt (pictured left) was invited to 'improve' the

Cathedral by de-cluttering and renovation. He had shot to fame following the success of the Pantheon, built in 1772 in Oxford Street, and in consequence had been appointed surveyor of Westminster Abbey in 1776. To address Wyatt's proposals, the Cathedral was closed from October 1789 for three years. That was the context in which John Berry had written his infamous letter to a Mr Lloyd of Conduit Street, London, dated 16 June 1788 -

Sir, This day I have sent you a Box full of old Staind and Painted Glass, as you desired me to due, which I hope will sute your Purpos, it his the best that I can get at present. But I expect to Beat to Peceais a great deale very sune, as it his of nowe use to we and we Due it for the lead. If you want Eney more of the same sorts you may have what thear his, if it will pay for the taking out, as it his a Deal of Truble to what Beating it to Peceais his. You will send me a line as sune as Posobl for we are goain to move ore glasing shop to a Nother Plase and thin we hope to save a greatt Deale more of the like sort, wich I ham your most Omble Servunt, John Berry.

According to another informant, *whole cartloads of glass, lead and other rubbish were removed from the nave and transepts, and shot into the town ditch, then in the course of being filled up; whilst a good deal of similar rubbish was used to level the ground near the chapter-house.*

By 1793, the vast majority of windows in the Cathedral would have had clear glass quarries, with only the East window of the Trinity Chapel having the Reynolds' depiction of the Resurrection, some patterned glass in the West window, and of course the 'Moses and the Brazen Serpent' window above the Quire which had been installed in 1780 (after having been displayed in the Pantheon). The Chapter House remained untouched.

But 1788 was also the year of the birth of John Beare and, following Wyatt's death in a carriage crash in 1813, this signalled a 'renaissance' too in the Cathedral windows. As fashion changed in the later regency years, Beare was invited in 1819 to reglaze the great west window, recreating the medieval glazing style. He used leftover glass from the Glaziers' workshop, and brought in glass from the Chapter House.

He also bought glass in London, mainly C14 and C15 French glass removed from church windows in northern France after the French Revolution. So, for example, the central lancet has a range of imported images of saints and biblical scenes, with three shields from the Chapter House at the bottom, the 1506 Garter Arms of King Henry VII at the top, all enclosed by patterned glass from the window it replaced and from the workshop. The three shields are, of course, those of Eleanor of Provence (wife of King Henry III), King Louis IX of France (brother-in-law of Eleanor) and King Henry III, with King (Saint) Louis having the prominent position in the



middle. The picture right shows the lancet in Beare's 1819 configuration - it was changed in 1920 when Mary Lowndes re-leded and re-configured this window and created the Jesse window and accompanying lancet in the south nave aisle.

The Garter Arms of King Henry VII (pictured below) also give equal importance to the English lions and to the French fleur-de-lys. Furthermore, the garter carries the French legend 'Honi soit qui mal y pense'. This is all despite the fact that English control in France had shrunk by this time to just the city of Calais.

These windows presaged a transformation in the Cathedral's glazing that took place in the nineteenth century, to recover from the influence of Wyatt, described by Pugin as Wyatt 'the Destroyer'. Beare's re-glazing was a magnificent achievement and his ledger stone in the nave near the font reflects this. It records that In all the duties of public and private life, he was much and deservedly respected; and under his skillful superintendence as the Glazier of this Fabric, the Windows and the Western Front were arranged and set and those of the south end of the Great Transept executed by copying Specimens of the Ancient Glass of this Cathedral.



King Henry VII had a chapel built at the east end of Westminster Abbey for his resting place; Wyatt too was buried in the Abbey. But for John Berry, the letter writer, there is no known grave.

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