

A PEEK THROUGH THE WINDOW - NO. 20

MIKE DEEMING WRITES:

The two greatest poets from the Salisbury Diocese were George Herbert and Thomas Hardy. Discuss!



Herbert of course was the vicar at Bemerton and his life is commemorated in the Cathedral by the superb window behind the Gorges tomb, where the images relate to his poem 'Joy and Charitie'. We peeked at this in Jot&Tittle 54. Thomas Hardy, pictured right, lived in the Dorset half of the diocese and his many serialised novels relate to Wessex. Indeed, the stone-mason 'Jude the Obscure' worked for a time in Melchester (Salisbury) Cathedral; the novel also drew on the experience of Hardy's sisters who attended the College of Sarum St Michael (now the Salisbury Museum). Hardy's grave is in the churchyard at Stinsford, near Dorchester, near to his home at Max Gate. The church is home to this fantastic commemorative window (below) by the prolific Scottish glazier, Douglas Strachan – it displays Hardy's favourite Old Testament story, in which Elijah listens to the still small voice after the tumult of wind, earthquake and fire. Hardy's funeral in 1928 was held in Westminster Abbey but proved controversial. He wished for his body to be buried at Stinsford next to his first wife,



Emma, but his executor insisted that he be placed in Poet's Corner in the Abbey. As a compromise, his heart was buried at Stinsford and his ashes at Poets' Corner. Hardy also wanted to be remembered as a poet, rather than as a novelist; but that is arguably not the common perception these days when he's probably best known for the films based on his novels.

The Westminster Abbey Poets' Corner graves and memorials are illuminated by the huge South Transept rose window, produced and installed by the glaziers Burlison and Grylls. The window was devised by the architect G F Bodley, who in 1868 had encouraged John Burlison and Thomas Grylls to establish their own studio, both having been trained at Clayton and Bell. Bodley had studied with George Gilbert Scott and together they were staunch advocates of the Early-English Gothic revival movement. Burlison and Grylls also supported that movement too and that brought them numerous commissions from Scott and Bodley.

Scott was, of course, responsible for re-establishing the Gothic style in Salisbury Cathedral in the 1860s and 1870s, with the active support of Bishop Walter Kerr Hamilton. Part of this support involved charging visitors to the Cathedral a fee as a contribution to the 'Fabric Fund'! Scott designed the bishop's cenotaph in the south choir aisle, incorporating a copy of the design based on the medieval screen now in the Morning Chapel. By 1886 when the bishop's wife Isabel died, the fashion had moved to memorial windows. So Burlison and Grylls were invited to design and install the window in her memory, above the St Martin altar in the Morning Chapel. The style is C15 Germanic, with images of the corporal acts of mercy, each in a castellated surround. This window opened the floodgates for late Victorian and C20 memorial windows in an amazing panoply of styles. Later windows, including the Herbert window here and the Hardy window in Stinsford, exemplify this amazing range of styles, but time moves on and no more windows were glazed in the Cathedral in the medieval style of Burlison and Grylls.

