



*Extracts from the Chapter minutes from 1733 onwards and divers historical prospecting.*

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## A PEEK THROUGH THE WINDOW - NO. 2

**M**ike Deeming continues his stories behind the Cathedral windows. In the last edition there was a piece on George Herbert (1593 - 1633).



*As on a window late I cast my eye  
I saw a vine drop grapes with J and C  
Annealed on every bunch. One standing by  
Asked what it meant. I (who am never loth  
To spend my judgment) said, It seem'd to me  
To be the bodie and the letters both  
Of Joy and Charitie; Sir, you have not miss'd  
The man reply'd; It figures Jesus Christ.*

The opening lines of George Herbert's poem are pictured in his memorial window (left) at the East end of the North quire aisle. Herbert (1593-1633) was a prolific poet and author of such memorable hymns as *King of Glory*, *King of Peace*, *Teach me my God and King*, *Let all the world in every corner sing* and *The God of Love my Shepherd is*. He appears in the window, the only case in the Cathedral where the dedicatee is actually depicted.

The window was designed by Christopher Rahere Webb (1886-1966) and installed in 1946. The unusual name 'Rahere' refers to the monk who established the Priory of the Hospital of St Bartholomew in 1123, now known as

Barts Hospital. Webb's father and uncle had undertaken extensive restoration work there in the nineteenth century. Webb trained at the Slade School of Fine Art and then was articled to Sir Ninian Comper. He is well-known for his windows with powerful images, often surrounded by clear or pale glass. This approach became popularised by the Arts and Crafts artists - there's another great example in the Edward Woore window nearby.

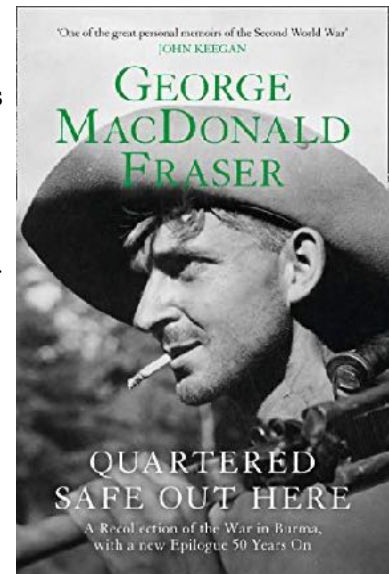
The style has been widely used to the present day, including in the Cathedral's most recent windows, the 2007 windows celebrating the Army Air Corps' fiftieth anniversary. The style is particularly valuable for north and east facing windows to allow plenty of daylight. Webb also designed the Holgate windows in the South quire aisle, with a complementary style. Elsewhere, Webb designed the outstanding Lady Chapel windows in Sherborne Abbey, and there are fine examples of his work in the Cathedrals of Chichester, St Albans, Sheffield and Southwark.



As with many glaziers, his windows usually include his maker's mark – an image of St Christopher (page 1) – and you can see it here at the very bottom right of the window with the names of his glass painters Frank Pinnock and Thomas Walden. Please do go and look! Another of Herbert's poems starts with the words 'Love bade me welcome', and, indeed, that's what this window shows.

### MISERICORDS

In the last edition I pointed out that one facet I had not realised was that they were designed to stop you falling asleep. In one of life's coincidences I have just finished reading George MacDonald Fraser's (of Flashman fame) *Quartered Safe Out Here*, his memoir of his time in the Burma war. The book ends up with him going to the 50<sup>th</sup> VJ-Day celebration in Carlisle Cathedral. He is sat in one of the choir stalls *which heave you out if you go to sleep - or so they used to tell us when we attended the old Grammar School's service*. Incidentally the doyen of military writers, John Keegan reports *There is no doubt that it is one of the great personal memoirs of the Second World War - humorous, thoughtful and poignant, I thoroughly enjoyed every page.*



### THE SECRET HISTORY OF WRITING

This Channel 4 series, presented by Lydia Watson and starring master calligrapher Brodie Neuenschwander (below), has been fascinating. For those who have not seen it I will try and précis the key points, especially those that affect our Cathedral.

As you know the Egyptians used the Nile sedge papyrus as a writing material. The reeds are cut into strips, rolled, soaked and formed into a lattice that is blotted and then pressed for a week. It came in various grades but the essential factor was its low cost. The Romans took over the monopoly in 30BC which meant that you could buy a book in Rome for 1 denarius (a soldier's pay for a day) and in addition there were 29 libraries in Rome alone. Once the empire split and shipping became difficult the scribes turned to parchment which was very expensive and took 3-4 times longer to write on. The result was that the libraries disappeared and Europe ceased to be literate, books becoming exclusively for the wealthy.

To make parchment, skin was stretched on a frame to realign the fibres which meant the tension had to be constantly adjusted. Hot water and a scraper (very hard work) were used to remove



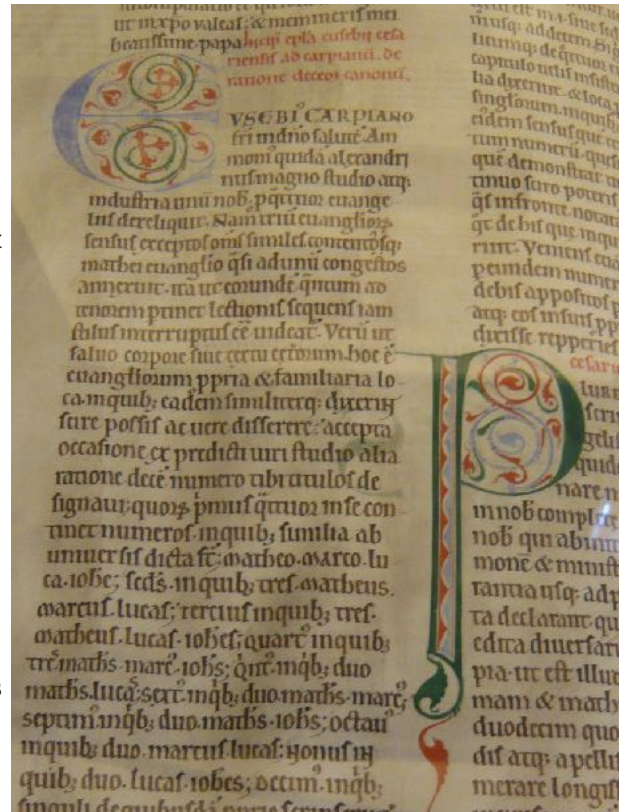
the hair and grease. I did not realise that our UK producer was the only one left in the WORLD! When dried and held to the light the marks left by the animal's spine can be seen. This is where the parchment was folded and hence the 'spine' of a stitched book. Eight pages formed an octavo which was very durable and wouldn't burn. Scribes (or prickers) scored the parallel lines and the writing was done between the lines, not on the lower line. The



quill as you know came from a goose or swan feather; this was shortened to prevent you poking yourself in the eye then slit, carved to a point and cut. Unlike a reed pen, used for papyrus, the quill held a reservoir that mean't you did not have to keep dipping it in ink. The camera went into magnification mode so you could see the 'nap' on the parchment that caused the ink to stay in place, as Brodie states, like tatooing.

Bruges, where Brodie has his studio, was the centre of the book industry and has wonderful archives. The accounts of the Guild of St. John (everyone to do with printing) for 1307 show that the Council alone spent £40 on velum - possibly £50,000 today. By 1472 there were 50 workshops producing 20 books a year (several run by women). This equates to just 1 book per 10,000 of the European population. They have a record of a commission for a two-volume illuminated and illustrated book totalling 800 pages (400 animals) which cost £20 - equivalent to the cost of a house.

Paper was a state secret in China for 600 years but in 751 the Arabs defeated the Tang army and captured some paper makers. Samarkand became the centre of the industry under the great fifteenth century astronomer Ulugh Beg (who incidentally, calculated the calendar year as 365 days, 6 hours and 10 minutes). It was almost impossible to print using cursive Arabic but Johannes Gutenberg, with Latin, which was written using individual letters, could easily cut blocks. He even printed on velum and had the manuscripts hand illuminated so you couldn't tell it wasn't hand-written. Lambeth Palace library has an original copy of his Vulgate Bible (right).



### GOOD WILL TO ALL MEN?

I looked for any references to Christmas in the Chapter Minutes.

February 1808: *Half-Guinea fine for Lay Vicars not attending Sunday and Christmas services.*

January 1851: *The Choristers be prohibited in future from applying for or receiving Christmas boxes.*

October 1853: *Lay Vicars. Fine for absence - £0.10.6 for Christmas, Holy Tuesday [Tuesday of Holy Week], Anniversary of Infirmary and public holidays. Otherwise £0.1.6.*

January 1855: *Gratuities paid for attendance on Sundays, Christmas Day and Ascension Day shall be confirmed.*

### THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

The shortest day of the year is the winter solstice on the 21 December. Excavations at Stone Henge show that this was Neolithic party time, including feasting and presents. The Roman Saturnalia began on 17 December and lasted at least five days. During this time rank and etiquette were overturned. Again feasting and gifts were the norm.

During the Medieval period, it was customary to fast until 24 December after which feasting reached a crescendo on Twelfth Night. Celebrating Christ's Mass is first recorded in 1038 when they combined religion with memories of Celtic and Roman traditions. This included the Yule

Log, kept burning throughout the season. If you could afford it you drank *braggot*, mulled strong ale with honey, cinnamon and brandy. Festivities were controlled by a *Lord of Misrule* (complete with crown). Houses and churches were decked with mistletoe (toe is a corruption of twig), holly and ivy. Carols were originally dances accompanied by sung choruses.

By Tudor times Twelfth Night was celebrated with a bean cake, whoever got the bean in their slice became *King of the Bean*. If it was a woman, then she chose the king! Everyone had to imitate the king, even down to a belch. It was also the time for dancing, dressing-up and plays, hence Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. Sugar was a great feature of aristocratic Christmas festivities and *sugar banquets* ensured that they were slightly 'high' but also suffered with their teeth (as Queen Elizabeth I did).

Our modern Christmas has of course come down to us from Albert (via Germany) who popularised Christmas trees, presents and cards (Penny Post 1840) as well as Boxing Day tips to servants and tradesmen. Crackers and Christmas pudding are also Victorian. Turkey was imported from America a long time before this period but was only eaten by the rich. The turkeys, bred in Norfolk, would start their 80-mile trek to London as early as October, with feet clad in leather boots. America is also where we got *Santa Claus* and his reindeer sleigh. Most families went to church and carols such as Good King Wenceslas, Once in Royal David's City and O Come All Ye Faithful are from this period. The concept of a day off work (humbug) also dates from the Victorians. Charles Dickens promoted the idea of giving gifts to poorer neighbours (Christmas Carol) - I am sure he would feel quite at home in 2020. Christmas stockings arrived at this time, especially for the poor when they contained an orange and a few nuts.

Father Christmas is of course an ancient phenomenon, part of the English midwinter festival, dressed in green as a sign of the coming spring. St. Nicholas came to the US from Dutch settlers (Sinter Klass) and morphed into Santa Claus. We now conflate the two, no doubt with the help of Mr Disney.



**A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL - AND  
A HEALTHY NEW YEAR.**