

# SALISBURY CATHEDRAL WW 2 MEMORIAL WINDOWS

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The most Eastern Memorial Window in the North Nave Aisle was presented to the Cathedral by the City of Salisbury Council after the Second World War.

The window was designed and created by Christine Webb to acknowledge the local members of the three Services who lost their lives and are depicted in the shadowing wings of the angel Gabriel. It also acknowledges the tremendous effort of those who served on the Home front, namely, in the left hand lancet, the National Fire Service, Home Guard and Air Raid Patrols.

the Land Army, the Auxiliary Transport Service, and the Women's Royal Air Force Service. Unfortunately several Units such as the Field Army Nursing Yeomanry were omitted.

Our in house glazier at the time, Trevor Wiffen, decided to rectify this and added all of the Farming Union, as well as the Nursing Services, which he has sited prominently in the Chapter House.



The most western of the three North Nave Aisle windows is to the Army Air Corps. In 1942 this was formed by the Army Command to raise and train special units for the forthcoming attack to liberate Europe. These troops were to be able to parachute, or land in gliders, behind enemy lines, to seize and hold key points to facilitate a secure landing and advance from the invasion beachheads across Normandy, later to spearhead the Rhine crossing.

They started by raising Parachute regiments, which ran into double figures, and The Glider Pilot Regiment, which consisted mainly of Sergeants, so that after landing they could command the men they carried until they had captured their objectives. They would then be returned to the UK for a further mission.

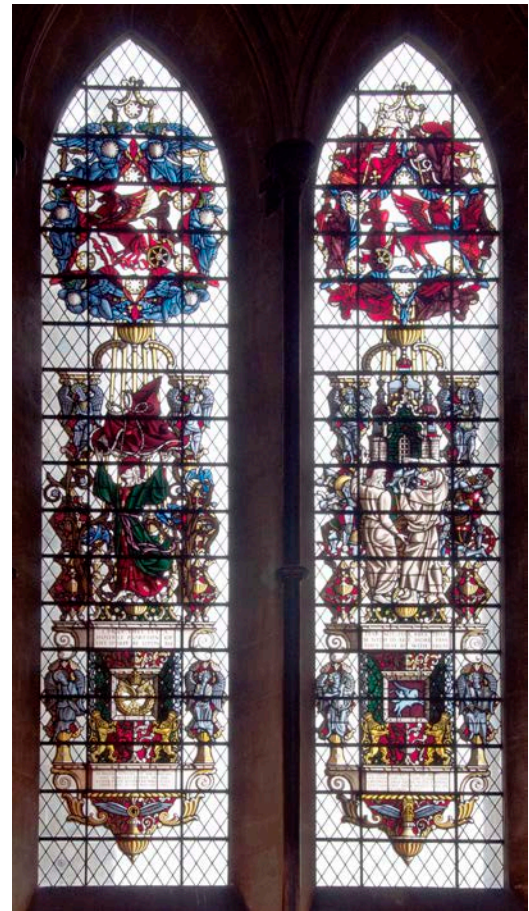
The gliders which they used, Horsas for men and light vehicles, light artillery and anti-tank guns, and Hamilcars for light tanks with crews, may be seen at the Museum of Army Flying at Middle Wallop.

The Oxfordshire and Buckingham Light Infantry were trained for this deployment method, to allow them time to recover from the severe losses at Dunkirk.

2014 marks the 70th anniversary of Operation Market Garden where huge losses were experienced at Arnhem, the bridge too far, and it is perhaps fitting that we are discussing it today.

By 1949 the War Office considered that they no longer needed the Army Air Corps, as such, but would retain the Parachute Regiment as lightly equipped shock Infantry. The Army Co- operation flights could continue, along with the Air Observation Post spotters for the Royal Artillery.

The Glider Pilots were to be allowed to wither on the vine after they had assisted the RAF with the Berlin Air Lift. As a result of being cross-trained onto heavy transport aircraft, it



is not surprising that some GPR pilots transferred into the RAF at this time.

Having lost so many Glider Pilots in WW 2, the AAC commissioned Harry STAMMERS to create a fitting tribute to them and consecrated this window in 1950. His identification mark is a compass rose in the bottom left-hand corner.

The window features two prophets of Israel, to be found in the bible at The Book of Kings 1 and 2, and depicts Elijah ascending to heaven in a chariot drawn by Pegasus, a fictional winged horse chosen as the emblem of all airborne forces, who all wore the maroon beret. This is reflected in the predominant colour of the window.



Elijah chose a ploughman, Elisha, to become his manservant and ultimate successor, and is shown pleading with Elijah to give him his cloak, which features in many of Elijah's miracles. He also asked to become more renowned than Elijah by asking for a double portion of his spirit.



Reading further in the book of Kings we find that it appears that he was so. One of these miracles is illustrated in the right-hand lancet, which depicts the occasion when Elisha had travelled to preach at Dothan, an important town on the trade routes through Palestine, which closed its gates at sunset.

The following morning when the inhabitants would normally open the gates they found they were surrounded by an army of Syrians who demanded Elisha become their prophet.

Having woken Elisha to report their plight, Elisha calmed them saying that his friends were mightier than any army, and scripture goes on to say that the army was blinded, and Elisha pitied them and led them back to their own land.



Later in the bible we read of King Solomon, in a similar situation, instructing his army to burnish their shields and use the sun's rays to blind their opponents. I believe this is what Elisha must have done earlier at Dothan.

At the bottoms of the window are depicted the original Army Air Corps Badge, and also the Flying badge of the Glider Pilots, in the left hand lancet, and the airborne forces patch, prayer and Army flying badge which is still in use by Army powered aircraft pilots.



By 1957 the Army Air Corps was reformed to control the Air Observation Post, Army Co-operation flights, and expand the role of flying in support of the Army generally. Some GPR members were still serving and formed a permanent cadre of instructors and commanders. It was initially restricted to 50 officers and 50 senior NCOs. Aircraft were also limited to an all up mass of 5000 pounds. The reason for this weight restriction was that the RAF was shrinking rapidly after the end of the war, and they suddenly realised that the Army was expanding its use of aviation, but in roles they were not qualified to undertake, or had not wanted to in the past. This AUM limitation was, however, eventually lifted.

Air Troops and Platoons were embedded in a number of Arms and Regiments, especially in reconnaissance roles during the cold war period, but were later reorganised into AAC Squadrons and Regiments. The Army had at last realised the essential use of aviation on the battlefield. The Aden, Radfan and Borneo campaigns would not have been won without Army Aviation, as ground manoeuvre was almost impossible.

In this final window we follow the link to the Army Air Corps of today, which did not go as smoothly as you may think. Because of broken service, the original cap badge could not be used, as it came into being in the reign of King George VI<sup>th</sup>, and is surmounted by his crown.

The Parachute Regiment's Commander objected to the use of their maroon beret, and a new colour had to be chosen and approved by HM the Queen, as also was the new cap badge displaying her crown.

In 2007, Caroline SWASH was commissioned to produce this window to mark the new AAC's 50th Golden Anniversary, together with the changes from the original 1942 AAC. The window was consecrated on the new foundation day, 21<sup>st</sup> September, when all serving and past members in the area attended.



The left hand lancet depicts Saint Michael, the patron saint of soldiers, subduing the Devil, and within the yellow border are depicted the aircraft in Army service in 1957. They include the Auster 9, Westland Sioux, Gazelle and Scout helicopters, also the Alouette 2.

The right hand lancet depicts Saint Christopher going forward with Christ, whose halo is surrounded by the colour of the new AAC's beret. Within its yellow border are the aircraft in service in 2007,



namely Britten-Norman Islander and Trilanders, Westland Lynx, Apache and Scout helicopters, and a Bell Iroquois.

Finally at the bottom is the Corps Prayer and its collect respectively.

